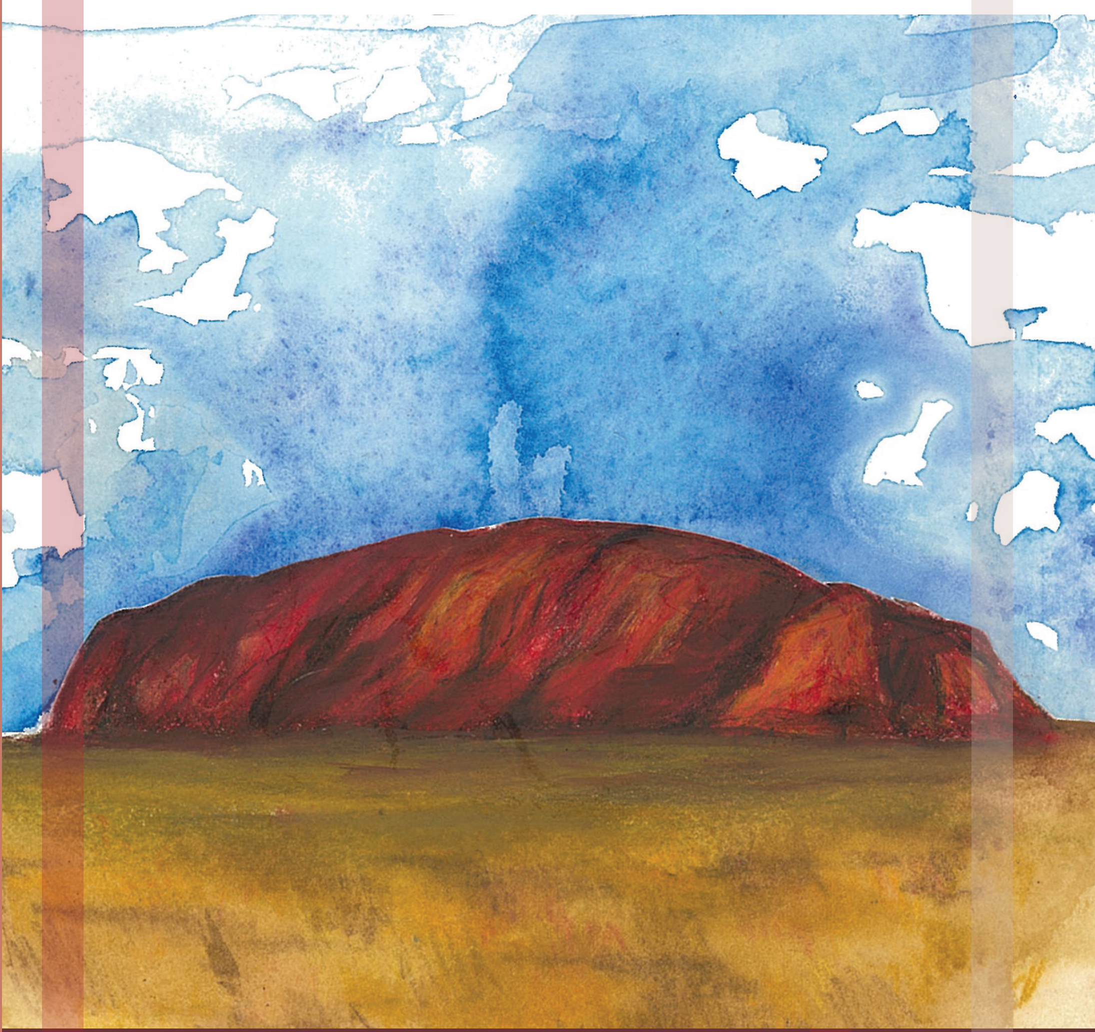

THE SAFE HOUSE DOWN UNDER

Jewish Refugees from Czechoslovakia in Australia 1938–1944

ANNA ROSENBAUM

Peter Lang

EXILE STUDIES

After the demise of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the Jewish population fell victim to Nazi persecution. Hoping to find a safe haven elsewhere in the world, some Czechoslovak Jews turned to Australia to seek refuge. This book focuses on their struggles to survive in life-threatening situations and their efforts to reach the safety of the distant continent.

Although the German occupation of Czechoslovakia has been a subject of extensive academic debate, the role of the Australian government in this international event has thus far not been examined. This book evaluates the impact on Australia of policies pursued by Europe's leading politicians with regard to Czechoslovakia that ultimately failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War.

Central to the book is a discussion of Australia's policy towards the admission of Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia. Drawing on archival sources as well as original interviews conducted with former refugees from Czechoslovakia, the author offers insights into the lives and experiences of these Jewish refugees down under. At the same time, the book sheds light on Australia's involvement in one of the defining moments of the twentieth century.

Anna Rosenbaum holds a PhD from the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney.

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THE SAFE HOUSE
DOWN UNDER

EXILE STUDIES

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Anna Rosenbaum

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To the sacred memory of my grandmother Laura Burger, who was saved,
and my grandfather Richard Burger, who was not.
And to the sacred memory of Martin's father Egon Emanuel Rosenbaum,
his grandparents Paula and Hermann Rosenbaum, and Markéta and
Bedřich Kahn, who never stood a chance.

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Abbreviations

AAP	Associated Australian Press
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AJWS	Australian Jewish Welfare Society
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMZV	Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních Věcí
AÚTGM	Archives of the Institute of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, Archiv Ústavu Tomáše Garrigua Masaryka
BCRC	British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia
CRTF	Czech Refugee Trust Fund
DSAP	German Social Democratic Worker's Party in the Czechoslovak Republic, Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik
HICEM	Acronym for HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), ICA (Jewish Colonization Association), EMIGDIRECT (A migration organization based in Berlin)
JOINT	American Joint Distribution Committee
NA, P	National Archives, Prague / Národní Archiv, Prague
NA UK	National Archives of the United Kingdom
NAA	National Archives of Australia
SdP	Sudeten German Party, Sudetendeutsche Partei
SMH	*Sydney Morning Herald*
UAP	United Australia Party

Preface and Acknowledgements

Having studied the history of the Holocaust for my master's degree at the University of Sydney, I chose the topic of exile studies for my doctoral dissertation. This book is based on my dissertation. The refugee experience of my family, as well as that of my husband and his family, has left indelible impressions. The perils that people were exposed to in their quest for survival and the impact of the Shoah on their families, influenced my decision to explore the all-encompassing subject of the emigrant experience. Further, the desire to embark on a journey to discover the history of the refugee movement between Czechoslovakia and Australia was a natural choice for several reasons: I grew up in post-war Czechoslovakia, I know the history and the language of the country and have settled in Australia, a country that has absorbed refugees from all over the world.

I owe many people and institutions my gratitude for helping me realize this project. Professor Emerita Suzanne D. Rutland was my chief supervisor and Professor Emeritus Konrad Kwiet was my associate supervisor in the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney. With Professor Kwiet I undertook the studies of the Holocaust. His vast knowledge and experience in exploring the catastrophe that befell the Jewish population in Europe from 1939 to 1945 was invaluable and gave me the necessary foundation for the next step: to study how this situation impacted on Australia. With Professor Rutland I then undertook a study of Australian Jewish history, including the country's immigration record prior to, during and after the end of the Second World War. Becoming familiar with the Jewish refugee movement and its impact on Australia, it was then possible for me to begin the research on Czech encounters with Australia, the immigration challenge this country faced in relation with events that shaped the pre-war history of Czechoslovakia and wartime contacts with the Czechoslovak government in exile in London. To Professor Rutland and Professor Kwiet I am greatly indebted for the expertise they shared with me, for their support and encouragement, their tireless efforts and the care they provided throughout the years that led to the completion of my dissertation.

Dr Kateřina Čapková in Prague was another seminal figure in bringing this dissertation to fruition. I owe her my deep appreciation. Her vast experience in Czech Jewish history prior to the Second World War as well as her knowledge of the situation of German and Austrian asylum seekers in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s were both of primary importance to my work.

In terms of organizations which have assisted me in my efforts to bring the history of Czechoslovak Jewish refugees to Australia to light, I want to thank the University of Sydney and the Fund for Jewish Higher Education. The University of Sydney provided me with grants that enabled me to visit archival institutions in Prague and to take part in 2008 in the conference entitled 'Czechoslovakia and the Crisis of Democracy in Central Europe in the 1930s and 1940s of the Twentieth Century – A Search for Solutions'. The Fund for Jewish Higher Education also provided financial assistance for my overseas research.

To all those who shared their experiences and stories I have to express my most sincere appreciation. The dissertation would not have been realized without the contributions of former Czechoslovak refugees or their descendants: the oral histories of Judy Avisar, Miriam Barash, the late Vera Bonyhady, Margaret Foster, Paul Gottlieb, the late Marie-Louise Hirsch, the late Professor Emerita Helen Hughes, Dorothy Kiers, Kay Koenig, the late Francis Lord, the late Mia Lipson and Misha Solar. Their refugee stories and those of their relatives were crucial to the understanding of the subject and my deep gratitude goes to all of them for having shared their experiences with me. Moreover, Peter Charles, the nephew of the late Marie-Louise Hirsch deserves thanks for providing information on the refugee experiences of Hirsch's parents and parents-in-law.

In Sydney, my thanks also go to Sophia Masters for her artistic image of Uluru, to Helen Bersten, former archivist of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, to Jeanette Tsoulos of the National Council of Jewish Women, to Sister Dr Marianne Dacy, who was the archivist of the Judaica archival collection at the University of Sydney, Eva Gertler, Nyree Morrison, archivist of the University of Sydney, Tinny Lenthen, the librarian of the Sydney

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In Melbourne, my thanks go to Lionel Sharp for sharing his list of migrants from which I was able to extract names of Czech and Slovak refugees, to Peter Frawley, archivist of the Alfred and Caulfield Hospitals in Melbourne, Kate Woods, the archivist of the University of Melbourne and Dr Petr Baum.

In Canberra, I would like to thank Robert Tugen, the great grandson of Robert George Tugen (Tugendhat), Caroline Connor, Brett Fenton, Michael Wenke and Patrick Ferry, archivists of the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Carol Bunyan, Secretary of the *Dunera Boys* Association.

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Furthermore, others who assisted me include Dr Jaroslava Milotová and her staff at the Institute of the Terezín (Theresienstadt) Initiative in Prague, historians Professor Petr Čornej, Dr Jan Martínek, Dr Alena Sklípalová, Associate Professor Bohumír Smutný, Dr Petra Meretová, Petr Brod, Dr Dagmar Černoušková from the Documentary and Research Centre of the Tugendhat Villa in Brno, Professor Ivan Kamenec in Bratislava, Associate Professor Antonie Doležalová, and Petr Kučera and Pauline Crump in London. I am grateful for their invaluable assistance.

It goes without saying that I must thank my husband Martin for his support, encouragement and patience throughout the years when I was trying to get ahead with my work. I am immensely grateful to my cousin Dr Robert Klein, who was unwavering in his encouragement to write this dissertation. My thanks go to my son Daniel, my daughter Nicole, to Tony and Kasia and to my grandchildern Isabelle, Olivia, Raphael, Joshua, Sophia and Ben for their understanding when at times I was not able to give them the same attention as full-time grandmothers do.

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I also acknowledge the support given by the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Introduction

> To abandon the Czech Republic to its fate would be to abandon Europe and the world to the reign of naked force and the certainty of eventual war.[1]
>
> — Editorial, *SMH* (1938)

Reading these lines published in the September 1938 editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*), one of Australia's most important daily newspapers during the Czechoslovak crisis, the readers' attention is drawn to the reality that the gradual process of Czechoslovakia's obliteration would encourage Hitler to advance his strategy for the conquest of Europe. Yet, Otto von Bismarck foresaw the consequences of aggression against the Czechs when he declared:

> Whoever is master of Bohemia, is master of Europe. Europe must, therefore, never allow any nation except the Czechs to rule it, since that nation does not lust for domination. The boundaries of Bohemia are the safeguard of European security and he who moves them will plunge Europe into misery.[2]

Bismarck's assessment was correct. Adolf Hitler, driven by his hatred of Czechoslovakia and its emancipated Jewish community, threatened punitive action against the country in retaliation for alleged discrimination and crimes committed by the Czechs against the ethnic German minority.[3] Eager to secure the besieged country's territory and its wealth, we know from hindsight that Hitler was already planning for his conquest of Europe and beyond. What became known as the Czechoslovak crisis was to have an impact on the political scene worldwide.

---

[1] 'The Issue in Europe', *SMH* (12 September 1938).

[2] Declaration of Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of Germany in 1886, quoted by Dr Edvard Beneš in *War and Peace* (New York: The Czechoslovak Information Service, 1943), 146.

[3] Johann W. Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

Hitler's ambitions for the expansion of Germany, beginning with the acquisition of the strategic Sudetenland border region, was supported by two leading powers in Europe: Britain and France. It is significant to question why the fate of Czechoslavakia was decided by foreign powers who appear to have overlooked Czech sovereignty in a land that had belonged to them for more than a millennium. One possible explanation is a lack of understanding outside Czechoslovakia at this time about the long history and traditions of the Czech people.

Reports by officers of the British Legation in Prague during the 1930s were heavily influenced by the backgrounds and beliefs of their authors. They were often a blend of fact-finding with personal interpretations of the situation. These views were contributing factors in substantiating the British Cabinet's perception of Czechoslovakia, leading to its failure to recognize not only the country's political stance as a hindrance to Hitler's plans for European hegemony,[4] but also its importance as an outpost of Western democracy in a region surrounded by totalitarian regimes. Significantly, there was widespread belief amongst British diplomats and politicians that if the Sudetenland was annexed to Germany this solution would in the end be recognized by the Czechs themselves as being in their interests because the country would then be saved from an insoluble problem.[5]

Following the 'Anschluss' (annexation) of Austria into the German Reich in March 1938 and aware that Hitler's next victim would be Czechoslovakia, world leaders espoused a policy of appeasement in an effort to prevent the outbreak of a new world war. Given Hitler's insistence that the Sudetenland was actually German territory, the notion that the creation of Czechoslovakia had been an error of judgement seemed justifiable. This perception also served as an expression of magnanimity towards an old enemy who claimed to have been wronged in defeat. The so-called 'artificial creation'[6] that was Czechoslovakia, which had absorbed several ethnic minorities of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire, was therefore viewed as worth sacrificing. However, the ease with which Hitler achieved the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia on 30 September 1938 merely emboldened him to embark on the destruction of what was left of the country. On 15 March 1939, the German army invaded Bohemia and Moravia, absorbing it into the Third Reich while Slovakia's fascist leadership created an 'independent' state, subservient to Nazi Germany.

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[4] Peter Neville, 'Nevile Henderson and Basil Newton, two British envoys in the Czech crisis 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft, Special Issue: The Munich Crisis 1938, Prelude to WWII* 10/2 (1999), 258–275. For a more detailed discussion of the reports of the British envoys to Czechoslvakia and their influence on Australian political views see Chapter 3.

[5] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Letter from Newton to Lord Halifax. See also NAA A981, CZE 20, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany, Foreign Office Prints', Item 174721. Letter from John Troutbeck to Anthony Eden, 4 February 1938.

Although the tragedy of Czechoslovakia has been an area of extensive academic debate, the role played by the Australian government during that period, in particular its attitude towards the admission of Jewish refugees from that country, has so far not been examined. This book therefore seeks to shed some light on the following issues: Australian government policies towards Czechoslovak Jewish immigration and to what extent were these policies influenced by antisemitism; the Australian government's contrasting attitude towards the admission of non-Jewish Sudeten German opponents to the Nazi regime as well as German and Austrian asylum seekers who found refuge in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s; and the attitude of Czechoslovakia's diplomatic representation in Sydney towards its Jewish citizens.

In addition, this work investigates the history of contacts between Czechoslovakia and Australia in the interwar period and the position taken by the Australian government towards the Czechoslovak crisis. It determines whether the Australian government recognized the legality and rationale of Czechoslovakia's opposition to Hitler and points to crucial factors that influenced the Commonwealth government's decision to support Britain's policy of appeasement. It examines whether Australia's leading politicians presented a united stand vis-à-vis the situation in Czechoslovakia in 1938 and 1939, scrutinizing the impact of the Czechoslovak crisis not only on decisions taken by the Australian government but also on a broad section of Australian society. Finally, it explores the refugee experience using personal stories to illustrate the overall experience, integration and contributions of this group to Australian society.

---

[6] Jindřich Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje: Politické a diplomatické vztahy Československa a Velké Británie (1918–1938)* (*Expectations not realized: Political and diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Great Britain 1918–1938*) (Prague: Karolinum, 2003), 312.

In the absence of any academic literature on the topic of Australian and Czechoslovak connections in both the Czech Republic and Australia, relating in particular to Jewish immigration, I began searching for relevant material in archival collections. Visits to the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and in Sydney over several years, followed by two study trips to three archival institutions in Prague, reveals a wealth of information that has so far escaped the attention of historians.

In order to understand the background to events that impacted on the Central European country in the late 1930s, it is necessary to outline Czechoslovakia's pre-war history, as documented in Czech, English, German and Slovak literature. This then provides the foundation for the study of archival material from Australia and the Czech Republic. Integrating a critical evaluation of material found in archival collections, together with literature relating to events that took place in the distant country, results in the presentation of a comprehensive study of a hitherto unknown part of Australia's immigration history from a time when the death knell of Czechoslovakia resounded throughout the world.

The book has been divided into ten chapters, each focusing on not only the complexity of the Czechoslovak situation, but also its effect on the development of the international situation in the late 1930s. Of importance is the inclusion of a summary of Jewish history in this Central European country which can be viewed as the precursor of events that led to the refugee crisis and its impact on Australia's immigration policy. The history of Czechoslovakia's Jewish population adds to the understanding not only of the complexity of Czechoslovakia's predicament but also Australia's role in assisting those whose lives came under threat as a result of policies to which the Commonwealth government gave support.[7]

---

[7] All translations of foreign texts are the author's own.

CHAPTER 1

The Small Country in the Heart of Europe

> Even though my tribe comes from the banks of the Jordan, it should not impinge on my brotherhood with the Czechs.
>
> — SIEGFRIED KAPPER (1846)[1]

The Czech homeland was under Habsburg domination from 1620.[2] During this period the Austrian monarchy spared no effort in seeking to eliminate any trace of Czech national identity,[3] while at the same time discriminating against the Jewish population. Surprisingly, this oppression failed to unite the two persecuted and yet divided communities.[4] As part of this attempt to eliminate any sense of Czech national identity Jews were obliged to adopt German names and speak German, particularly under the rule of Josef II (1741–1790).[5] This act had far reaching consequences, not only with regard to their relationship with the non-Jewish community, but also within the Jewish community itself in the subsequent two centuries.[6] As seen in the quotation above, Siegfried Kapper wanted Jews to feel part of the Czech nation rather than a nation apart, even though their origins were different.

---

[1] Quoted from Siegfried Kapper, *České Listy od Siegfrieda Kappera* (*Czech Folios by Siegfried Kapper*) (Prague: Nakladatelstvi Calvéského Knihkupectví, 1846), 55.

[2] Josef V. Polišenský, *History of Czechoslovakia in Outline* (Prague: Bohemia International Publishing, 1991), 66.

[3] Ibid. 66, 68.

[4] Hans Kohn, 'Before 1918 in the Historic Lands', in Livia Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia, Historical Studies and Surveys*, vol. I (New York: Society for the History of Czechoslovakian Jews, 1968), 14.

[5] Hillel J. Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva: Národnostní konflikt a židovská společnost v Čechách 1870–1918* (*The Formation of Czech Jewry: The Nationality Conflict and Jewish Society in Bohemia 1870–1918*) (Prague, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2011), 14.

Nevertheless, the nineteenth century gave rise to a nationalist movement which saw the revival of Czech cultural identity.[7] Jewish citizens were part of this movement and active in the 1848 revolution. Following this revolution significant changes were introduced to Czech society. In terms of the Jewish population, one important development was the emancipation of male Jews in 1867.[8]

Historians now believe this change was not widely welcomed by Czech society. The Czech historian Josef Hanzal[9] divides manifestations of Judeophobia into four areas: popular, provincial, urban and intellectual. He demonstrates that the introduction of greater rights to the Jewish community met with an increase in antisemitism. In rural areas, where members of Jewish society were engaged in small business, they were ostracized and depicted as threatening the Czech population with alleged objectionable practices.

In urban areas, antisemitism was further stimulated by the economic success of many Jews and a steady increase in the number of Jewish professionals, whose competition with Czech professionals was a matter of concern. This was exacerbated by an upsurge in Jewish migration from rural to urban areas. Kieval[10] argues that changes in the demographic composition that took place in the countryside and subsequent migration to industrializing cities of both Jewish and non-Jewish populations had a significant impact on the Czech-Jewish relationship.[11] In addition, Jews were seen to subscribe to the Vienna press – a sensitive issue viewed with disdain by the Czechs. This strengthened the common belief amongst the Czech population that the Jews could not be integrated because they were a malignancy on the body of the nation.[12] Jaroslav Med, a literary historian, points out that antisemitism in the nineteenth century was based on the notion of an existing national and social anomaly inherent to the Jewish race. As a result, 'traditional religious intolerance was transformed into a hard line socio-nationalistic repulsion of the Jews'.[13]

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[6] Kateřina Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé? Národní identita Židů v Čechách* (*Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity of Jews in Bohemia*) (Prague-Litomyšl: Paseka, 2005), 46–47. See also Ruth Kerstenberg-Gladstein, 'The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands, 1848–1918', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. I, 32–33.

[7] Jürgen Tampke, *The Lands of the Wenceslav Crown: Czech German Relations and the Politics of Central Europe, From Bohemia to the EU* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 1–25.

[8] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 51.

[9] Josef Hanzal, 'Kořeny a projevy českého antisemitismu na přelomu 19. a 20. století' (Roots and expressions of Czech antisemitism at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century), in Miloš Pojar, ed., *Hilsnerova aféra a česká společnost 1899–1999* (*The Hilsner Affair and Czech Society 1899–1999*) (Prague: Jewish Museum, 1999), 160–163.

In the cultural field, works of upcoming Czech writers were likewise imbued with antisemitism. Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821–1856), one of the leaders of the Czech liberation movement and founder of Czech journalism, declared that 'the Jews were an independent ethnical group who would naturally turn to the German nation rather than the Czechs'.[14] Jan Neruda, a highly regarded popular writer, was even more outspoken in his rejection of Jews who were keen on integrating with the Czechs:

> Jews are outsiders everywhere but in our land they are the most hostile of all aliens. An outstanding German observer remarked: A German might become a Jew but a Jew will never become a German. They are and will remain a dagger thrust into our flesh, their festering excretion spreading far and wide.[15]

---

[10] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 21–31.

[11] Ibid. 61.

[12] Hanzal, 'Kořeny a projevy českého antisemitismu na přelomu 19. a 20. století', 162.

[13] Jaroslav Med, 'Antisemitismus v české kultuře druhé republiky' (Antisemitism in the culture of the Second Republic), *Soudobé dějiny* 15/1 (2008), 10.

[14] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 75–76.

[15] Jan Neruda, *Pro Strach Židovský* (*For the Fear of Jews*) (Prague: Grégr and Dattel, 1870), 14–19.

During this period, many Jews made great advances and became prosperous, providing employment for Jews and non-Jews alike.[16] Nevertheless, they were targeted by the press as an undesirable element.[17] The situation then became even more precarious as a consequence of the Hilsner affair in 1899. The murder trial provided an opportunity for the clergy, academics and newspaper editors to foster antisemitic propaganda.[18]

Leopold Hilsner was represented by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who defended him against the blood libel allegations, taking a stance against the majority view that Hilsner was guilty of homicide. Masaryk, who was to become the first president of independent Czechoslovakia two decades later, was ostracized by Czech society for his struggle to prevent an innocent person from being put to death. A wave of antisemitism swept through all echelons of Czech society during the trial. Jiří Kovtun interprets this phenomenon of Czech antisemitism as an expression of ignorance or unwillingness on the part of its advocates to acquaint themselves with the true substance of the so-called Jewish question.[19]

In the second half of the nineteenth century the stereotypical image of the Jew was also used as a representative of the enemies of Christian socialism. The finger was pointed at Jewish entrepreneurs who were accused of exploiting the working classes, creating hardship for Christian workers. In the Czech Lands, antisemitism moved between the left and right of politics before finally finding its place amongst the nationalistic movement of the 'Young Czechs'.[20] Michal Frankl summarizes antisemitism in the Czech historic lands and compares antisemitic trends in neighbouring countries.[21] He emphasizes that religious, economic and national interests made the Jew an enemy. The structure of education, linguistic differences and the immigration of East European Jews further exacerbated antipathy. He further concludes that this source of antisemitism can be found in the theory of the conspiracy of the Jews against the Christian world, allegedly promoted by the teachings of the Talmud.[22] While this ideology shared much in common with similar beliefs in Austria and Germany, in the Czech case it was further supported by Czech-German enmity based on national rivalry.[23]

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[16] Kerstenberg-Gladstein, 'The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands', 40.

[17] Michal Frankl, *Emancipace od Židů: Český antisemitismus na konci 19. století* (*Emancipation from the Jews: Czech Antisemitism at the end of the 19th Century*) (Prague, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2007), 73–83.

[18] Jiří Kovtun, 'Historická dimenze Hilsnerova případu' (The historical dimensions of the Hilsner affair), in *Hilsnerova aféra a česká společnost 1899–1999*, 18.

[19] Ibid. 20.

[20] Ibid. 20–21.

[21] Frankl, *Emancipace od Židů*, 14–20.

In response to growing antisemitism, and following the revolution of 1848, the Czech Jewish community sought to transform itself from within, seeking assimilation and a way to interact with the surrounding non-Jewish community. In the words of Viktor Teytz, the editor of the Czech-Jewish press, 'we never thought of ourselves as Czechs of the Mosaic confession, like the Jews in Germany, we incorporated Czechism into Judaism, into a movement aimed at giving Czech Jews a good name'.[24] The move towards assimilation, more pronounced in urban areas (in Prague in particular), was demonstrated in a perceived relaxation vis-à-vis the tenets of the Jewish religion. This, in turn, was conducive to developing an individual approach to religion that later paved the way for secularization.[25]

Being secular did not mean renouncing one's Jewish heritage, but instead helped to define the position of a Jew in modern society at a time when religion was giving way to progress in all areas of social, scientific, philosophical and political advancement. Modernizing the Jewish image was an incentive towards assimilation. Secularized Jewish men and women honoured Jewish traditions out of respect but were no longer bound by its laws. Theirs became a tribal affiliation to Judaism. Significantly, this change was aimed at presenting a new and sympathetic image, which it was hoped the rest of the population would come to appreciate. In particular, the trend towards assimilation became popular with Jewish socialists and later in the twentieth century with Jewish communists.[26] However, the Gentile community continued to keep its distance.[27]

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[22] Ibid.13.

[23] Ibid. 15–18.

[24] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 98.

[25] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 134–138.

In a further attempt to overcome obstacles presented by antisemitic feeling, a growing number of Jews also chose to convert to Christianity.[28] Between the secularists, discussed above, and the converts to Christianity there were also Jewish citizens who considered themselves non-denominational.[29] While these trends were not particular to the Czech historic lands, Bohemian Jews were differentiated in the way in which they became divided on the premise of cultural and linguistic affiliations as a result of the rise of Czech nationalism.[30]

Significantly, the majority of Jews inhabiting Bohemia and Moravia at this time appear to have identified with a German heritage. One way in which this manifested itself was in the desire to acquire higher education at German universities.[31] Likewise, in Germany and Austria, Jewish citizens attached themselves to Germanic culture in the face of growing antisemitism from their country of residence.[32] Combined with this association with a German background we can observe the influence of the rise of racial theories. Concepts of Germanic superiority were applied to Slavonic peoples and as a result German-speaking Jews were thus not tempted to assimilate too closely with native Czech society. A Czech identity could have been considered inferior to a Germanic one. This additional racial tension led to a deepening split between Czech and German-speaking Jews.[33]

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[26] Michael Anthony Riff, 'Assimilation and Conversion in Bohemia, Secession from the Jewish Community in Prague 1868–1917', *LBI Yearbook* 26 (1981), 73–88.

[27] Frankl, *Emancipace od Židů*, 26–46.

[28] Kohn, 'Before 1918 in the Historic Lands', 19, 49.

[29] Riff, 'Assimilation and Conversion in Bohemia', 73–88.

[30] Blanka Soukupová, 'Češi-židé: K identitě československého hnutí 1918–1926' (Czech-Jews: On the identity of the Czech Jewish Movement 1918–1926), in Blanka Soukupová and Marie Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech* (*Jewish Minority in Czechoslovakia in the Twenties*) (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2003), 51–64.

[31] Ibid. The Czech University was established in 1882 as part of Charles University.

[32] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 91.

[33] Ibid. 93–99.

In contrast, many Czech-speaking Jewish people publicly confessed to being Jewish.[34] With the realization of a linguistic and ethnic-based division amongst the Jewish population came a change in the attitude of sections of the population towards Czech-orientated Jews. Leading personalities from the Czech Jewish movement, Alois Zucker,[35] and Bohumil Bondy,[36] began to be perceived as allies in the struggle against the hegemony of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in cooperation with the 'Staročechy movement' (the movement of Old Czechs).[37] Further, the antisemitic policies of the prevailing, fundamental 'Mladočechy movement' (the movement of Young Czechs) meant the Jewish population were considered by many to be a hostile element in the nation's midst.[38]

Many Czechs saw German-oriented Jews as an obstacle to achieving their goals. German-based education, to which many Jews adhered, attracted children of both denominations into the opposite side of Czech nationalist efforts.[39] This was in spite of the fact that several Jewish organizations, particularly those which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, actively promoted Czech-Jewish integration. The Association of Czech Academic Jews (Spolek českých akademiků-Židů) and the Or-Tomid Society for the reformation of public worship and ritual[40] both sought integration of Jews into the Czech nation as part of the struggle against antisemitism. The Political Union of Czech Jews went even further in its efforts and fought against the existence of German Jewish schools in Bohemia and Moravia. Public figures also sought ways to negate the effects of antisemitism. Eduard Lederer, the industrialist Bohumil Bondy and

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Alois Zucker, professor at the Czech University, was elected to the Imperial Parliament in 1885.

[36] Bohumil Bondy was an industrialist, imperial counsellor, counsellor of the Prague Chamber of Commerce, Knight of the Order of Francis Joseph I.

[37] Frankl, *Emancipace od Židů*, 41–42; Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 99; and Egon Hostovský, 'The Czech-Jewish Movement', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. II, 148–154.

[38] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 100–110.

[39] Ibid. 71–73.

[40] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 99–100.

most prominently Dr Viktor Vohryzek – founder of the movement for acculturation called 'Rozvoj' (Development) and later the founder of a weekly journal of the same name – worked hard in seeking to reverse the view amongst segments of the population that Jews were, by tradition, enemies of the Czech nation.[41] Yet, the leaders of the radical Czech liberation movement rejected the idea of a Czech-Jewish symbiosis and did not disguise their dislike of the Jews.[42]

As a direct consequence of the Hilsner affair, during which time hope for integration within the Czech nation became more remote, the Bar Kochba Zionist society was established in 1901. While the activities of Theodor Herzl had a profound impact on adherents to the newly established Zionist ideology, its appeal amongst Czech-speaking Jews was not all that strong.[43] Zionism, at this time, was confined to a close circle of individuals who considered the Jewish settlement of Palestine as the only viable step towards a renewal of Jewish nationhood. While the Zionist ideology did not appeal to the leaders of Czech-oriented Jewish population, there was a level of agreement on the idea that the creation of Jewish Palestine may help to solve to the acute problem of Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe.[44]

Interestingly, the movement also created an innovative cultural base – the development of a specifically Zionist culture based on Jewish traditions. A better understanding of Zionism also created an awareness of the need to become familiar with Modern Hebrew and Jewish literature.[45] In broad terms, the Czech Jewish population, now anchored in a bilingual environment where Judaism in its original form was losing its appeal, came to understand the need for Jewish regeneration.[46] Thus, while Zionism in its infancy was not particularly attractive to Jews in Bohemia and Moravia, whether German- or Czech-speaking, it was crucial in the awakening of pride in being Jewish.[47]

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[41] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 119–134.

[42] Martin Kučera, 'Reakce na Hilsneriádu v táboře českých radikálů' (The reaction of Hilsner's trial on the part of Czech radicals), in Pojar, ed., *Hilsnerova aféra a česká společnost 1899–1999*, 73–89.

[43] Kerstenberg-Gladstein, 'The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands', 53.

[44] Marie Zahradníková, 'Palestina – země zaslíbená? Pohled českožidovských asimilantů na Palestinu ve dvacátých letech' (Palestine – the promised land? The view of Czech Jewish asimiliationists on Palestine in the 1920s), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 77–95.

[45] Čapková, *Češi, Němci Židé?*, 180–187. Correspondence with Kateřina Čapková, 6 March 2010.

For many Jews of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, emigration was perceived to be the solution to ongoing antisemitism, with many heading for the United States of America to start new lives. It would take more than half a century before emigration to Australia was considered.[48]

On the eve of the First World War, Jews from the Czech historic lands were unaware that they would, in the not too distant future, become part of a newly formed state, the Republic of Czechoslovakia. Although negative sentiments towards Jews were not altogether eradicated, the first Czechoslovak Republic[49] was nevertheless to become an island of tolerance in the sea of intolerable antisemitism. The birth of Czechoslovakia in October 1918 brought with it freedom of expression and worship. Importantly, the new republic achieved international diplomatic recognition due largely to the efforts of US President Woodrow Wilson.[50] Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who led the struggle for his country's independence, became its first president. The most important change to the country's structure was the addition of Slovakia, a region bordering eastern Moravia.

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[46] Kateřina Čapková, 'Charakter židovského nacionalismu v českých zemích a jeho recepce v prvorepublikovém Československu' (The Appeal of Jewish Nationlism and its Reception in the first Czechoslovak Republic), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 65–76.

[47] Kerstenberg-Gladstein, 'The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands', 60.

[48] Kohn, 'Before 1918 in the Historic Lands', 26.

[49] Radka Čermáková, 'Československá republika – nový stát ve Střední Evropě a Židé' (The Czechoslovak Republic – a new state in Central Europe), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 9–17.

[50] Stanislav Kirschbaum, ed., *European Roots: The Case of Slovakia, Central European History and the European Union – The Meaning of Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 19.

Languishing under Hungarian domination for a thousand years, the Slovak nation was linguistically closely related to the Czechs. However, the historical development of Slovakia was very different from that of Bohemia and Moravia. The Catholic Church had a strong base and the population of the Slovak towns was primarily Magyarized. Slovak national awakening dates back to 1863 but was suppressed in 1875 by Hungarian authorities.[51]

Following the defeat of Hungary as a dual partner in the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918 the Slovaks, who were initially sympathetic to the idea, accepted unification with the Czechs cautiously. However, Hungary, determined to keep its hold over Slovakia, only relinquished its control after the Prague government ordered the army to occupy Slovakia. The area was finally pacified ten months after the proclamation of Czechoslovakia as a nation.[52]

In addition, the area called Subcarpathian Ruthenia ('Zakarpatská Ukrajina' or 'Podkarpatská Rus'), on the eastern border with Slovakia, was also incorporated into Czechoslovakia. Jewish inhabitants in this area typically spoke both Yiddish and Hungarian. Poverty was widespread and basic education was lacking.[53] Moreover, Subcarpathian Jews adhered to strict rules of Jewish orthodoxy. Ivan Olbracht, a Czech author whose father was Jewish, describes the lives of poverty stricken ultra-orthodox Jews in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. A leftist writer, his book *Golet v údolí* (*Diaspora in the Valley*) (1937) was popular in communist Czechoslovakia.

There were 167 Jewish communities in the newly acquired Slovakian territories.[54] While some Hungarian-speaking Slovak Jews had benefited from Hungarian efforts to industrialize Slovakia and held significant positions throughout the region[55] nevertheless the overall situation of the Jewish population in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia remained ambiguous. In particular, the linguistic affiliation of Slovak Jews to the Hungarian language and their identification with Hungarian culture, together with the rise in their prosperity resulted in a sharp increase in enmity on the part of the non-Jewish Slovak population. This echoed the problems German-oriented Jews were experiencing in the Czech Lands.[56] While many Slovak Jews seemed inclined to entrust their future to prosperous Hungary, most of the non-Jewish population also supported Magyarization because it furthered their ambitions in terms of social and professional advancement.[57]

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[51] Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State 1918–1987* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 28.

[52] Livia Rothkirchen, 'Slovakia II, 1918–1938', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. I, 85–87.

[53] Aryeh Sole, 'Subcarpathian Ruthenia: 1918–1938', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. I, 128.

[54] Eduard Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokráciou a Slovenským štátom v stredoeuvropskom kontexte* (*The Jewish community in Slovakia beween Czechoslovakia's parliamentary democracy and the Slovak state in the Central European context*) (Prešov: Universum, 1999), 16.

This rise in the social position of affluent Jews together with their opposition to Slovakization led to allegations of Jewish perfidy and charges of exploitation of the Slovak masses.[58] Their affiliation with the Hungarians was seen as a betrayal of Slovak efforts to achieve independence. The newspaper editor Svetozár Hurban-Vajanský (1847–1916) bitterly accused the entire Jewish community of moral and material impoverishment of the Slovak people. He described them as 'a murderous race carrying on a terrible struggle against all who do not belong to it'.[59] In addition, the arrival of more Jews from Eastern Europe, escaping pogroms, was met with increasing religiously based antisemitism in Slovakia.[60]

Slovak Jews enjoyed a wide network of educational facilities, both secular and religious. Secular education was in Hungarian while in the eastern part of Slovakia, amongst the orthodox Jewish communities, the 'cheder' and the 'yeshiva' were the predominant vehicles of Jewish education. Wealthy Jews obtained their education at Hungarian tertiary institutions and applied themselves successfully in the practice of free professions.[61] Jewish literature in Slovakia of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was also making its mark. A number of Slovak Jews penned important works with Jewish themes in Hungarian, German and Hebrew.[62]

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[55] Livia Rothkirchen, '1918-Slovakia: I', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. I, 76–77.

[56] Ibid. 73.

[57] Ivan Kamenec, *On the Trail of Tragedy* (Bratislava: H&H, 2007), 23.

[58] Rothkirchen, '1918-Slovakia: I', 7.

[59] Kamenec, *On the Trail of Tragedy*, 24–25.

[60] Rothkirchen, '1918-Slovakia: I', 75–76.

The Czechoslovak Republic

After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, many Jewish people in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia found themselves at a crossroads. Those who were prosperous and Magyarized stood firm in their allegiance to Hungary, while a number of Jewish nationalists, whether Slovak or Hungarian-orientated, became attracted to Zionism. An increasing number of members of the Jewish working class became affiliated with the newly established Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. According to historian Ján Mlynárik the rest remained attached to Jewish orthodoxy, isolated and in their majority rejecting modernizing trends.[63]

Nevertheless, in 1919 representatives of the Slovak Jews joined the Congress of the Jewish National Council,[64] uniting Jews from both parts of the country. Furthermore, Jewish nationality became a new option, anchored in the new republic's constitution on 20 February 1920.[65]

In terms of the wider community, the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic inaugurated a new era for both Czechs and Slovaks. Not just the Jews but also the Slovaks needed to assimilate in order to integrate into the new state. What held both of these groups back was a sense of unfamiliarity and a degree of mistrust towards the concept of Czechoslovak statehood. In addition, the dominant force assuming control of Slovakia's affairs was Czech, which caused much resentment amongst the Slovaks.[66] The Slovak historian Alena Bartlová argues that in the wake of negotiations between Czechs and Slovaks, no mutual agreement for power-sharing was reached following the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Yet, at the same time, Bartlová acknowledges that Slovakia lacked the body of skilled professionals – government administrators, economists, educators and industrialists – required to fill these roles. It was, therefore, not surprising that Czechs took over executive roles in the region.[67]

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[61] Ibid. 76.

[62] Ibid. 80–82.

[63] Ján Mlynárik, *Dějiny Židů na Slovensku* (*The History of Jews in Slovakia*) (Prague: Academia, 2005).

[64] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 87.

[65] Čermáková, 'Československá republika – nový stát ve Střední Evropě a Židé', 9–21.

The creation of Czechoslovakia was a remarkable event. Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians and Ruthenians all became nominally Czechoslovak citizens. They were also to be beneficiaries of a regime that espoused ideals of democracy. However, the reality was that the majority of those who did not speak Czech or Slovak found it difficult to re-orientate and adjust to an unfamiliar situation. This impacted particularly on the Germans and Hungarians, as their position in the new state changed overnight.[68]

The formation of the new republic also affected the relationship between the Czech and Slovak Jewish communities. In 1919,[69] representatives of the Slovak Jews joined the Congress of the Czech Jewish National Council, formed in November 1918, uniting Jews from both parts of the country. As well, the new constitution, ratified on 20 February 1920, recognized Jewish nationality within its minority treaties.

The issue of allegiance to a certain ethnic group within Czechoslovakia began to assume greater significance. For the German-speaking population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, the continued use of German was an expression of identity and defiance. Their hopes rested on efforts to establish a

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[66] Bohumil Doležal, 'Obraz nepřítele v české národní ideologii' (The image of the enemy in Czech ideology), *Revue pro Středoevropskou Kulturu a Politiku* 14/85 (1998), 16–23.

[67] Alena Bartlová, 'Political power-sharing in the interwar period', in Jiří Musil, ed., *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 159–179.

[68] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 65–73.

[69] Ibid. 87.

German-ruled area in the outlying regions of the new state.[70] To the Czechs, this group's refusal to learn Czech and identify with the Czech cultural environment was an affront. In terms of the German-speaking Jews who formed part of this section of society, it was a clear sign that they were not willing to give up their German cultural heritage.[71]

Between 1918 and 1920 the hopes of Czechoslovak Jews that antisemitism would be obliterated in the ideals of the new state were shattered by anti-Jewish riots.[72] The media weighed into the debate and commenced a campaign against the Jews, accusing them of causing the war, homelessness, unemployment and poverty, as well as amassing wealth through profiteering during the First World War.[73]

To understand the roots of this outburst of antisemitism, it is necessary to take into account the impact of the First World War on Europe. The suffering and privations experienced during the war resulted in a redefinition of values and forced many sections of society to reassess and make far-reaching changes. The dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire created a sense of turmoil and despair in relation to the recent past, perplexity in face of the present, and uncertainty over the future.[74] Despite its idealistic aspirations the government was unable to quell the initial wave of antisemitic excesses.[75]

Blanka Soukupová argues that antisemitism in the early years of the republic was the vehicle that enhanced its raison d'être. It was considered the most important element of nationalism and became known as national antisemitism.[76] Intimidation of Jews had the support of the Agrarian, Christian Socialist, Slavonic Social and the so-called State Legal Democratic parties, as well as numerous politicians, journalists and members of the public.[77] However, by 1920 the anti-Jewish violence had abated and Czechoslovakia was regarded as the only country in Central and Eastern Europe in the interwar period where Jews lived essentially free of persecution. As a result of economic consolidation, the country underwent a 'humanitarian' facelift during this period and Čapková maintains that 'national ambitions of the Czechs had been fully satisfied with the creation of the Czechoslovak state'.[78] Antisemitism therefore declined because it had outlived its purpose.

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Soukupová, 'Češi-Židé', 51.

[72] Čermáková, 'Československá republika – nový stát ve Střední Evropě a Židé', 11–12.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Soukupová, 'Češi-Židé', 51–57.

[75] Jan Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938–1948: Beyond Idealisation and Condemnation* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 6.

[76] Blanka Soukupová, 'Česká identita po vzniku Československé republiky: Antisemitismus jako faktor upevnění jsoucnosti? 1918–1920' (Czech identity after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic: Antisemitism as a feature of nation

The determination of Masaryk to eliminate antisemitism in Czechoslovakia was also instrumental at this time. His defence of Hilsner had won him international support, especially from North American Jews and President Woodrow Wilson. Indeed, following Wilson's suggestion, Masaryk resolved to include the clause recognizing Jewish ethnicity in Czechoslovakia's constitution.[79] Masaryk formed an opinion prior to the outbreak of the war that Jews should be considered as a nation.[80] In order to further this aim the National Council of Jews (NCJ) was established on 22 October 1918 with Max Brod, Ludvík Singer and Norbert Adler as its representatives. Its programme included the demand for recognition of Jewish nationality, eradication of antisemitism and full equality for the Jewish population.[81]

Masaryk was at all times committed to upholding truth and justice. He defended Hilsner because he was incensed by antisemitism-fuelled

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consolidation? 1918–1920). in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 27.

[77] Blanka Soukupová, 'Česky antisemitismus ve dvacátých letech 20. století. Antisemitismus jako složka české identity' (Czech antisemitism in the 1920s of the twentieth century: Antisemitism as part of Czech identity?), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 36–49.

[78] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 26.

[79] Ibid. 34–35.

[80] Blanka Soukupová, 'T. G. Masaryk a židé (Židé), židé (Židé) a T. G. Masaryk: legenda a skutečnost' (Masaryk and the Jews, the Jews and T. G. Masaryk: the legend and the reality), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 116.

[81] Čermáková, 'Československá republika – nový stát ve Střední Evropě a Židé', 9.

injustice permeating the legal system and the church. In November 1899, the journal *Čas* published his article in which he writes: 'clerical antisemitism is a national evil'.[82] In another article published in *Naše doba* in Prague in 1905, Masaryk writes: 'Antisemitism is our wound and, in fact, only ours. Antisemitism harms us, corrupts us morally and makes us uncivil'.[83] He also understood the need for Jews to have a home of their own. In July 1927, he visited Palestine where he encountered proud, determined and self-conscious Jews who tilled the land and Jewish scholars who taught at the newly established Hebrew University.[84] He met Hugo Bergman, a Czech Jewish professor who became the university's first chancellor. Moreover, he heard Jews conversing in a revitalized language and saw confident children learning in Hebrew schools. He visited kibbutzim settled by 'chalutzim' (pioneers) from Czechoslovakia and was impressed by their achievements. A forest was planted in his honour and an agricultural settlement was named after him (Kfar Masaryk).[85] Masaryk saw in Zionism the future for Jewish revival and the cornerstone of Jewish nationhood. His efforts to strengthen the idea towards the development of Jewish ethnicity were realized when he personally funded the newly established Hebrew High School in Munkács in Subcarpathian Ruthenia.[86]

Masaryk's relationship with the Jews was mirrored to some extent in the Jewish community's efforts to create a viable relationship with the

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[82] Soukupová, 'T. G. Masaryk a židé (Židé), židé (Židé) a T. G. Masaryk: legenda a skutečnost', 119.

[83] Zdeněk Šolle, 'Masarykovo vystoupení v hilsneriádě a jeho vztah k Masarykovu řešení české otázky' (Masaryk's attitude towards the Hilsner affair and his approach to the Czech question), in Pojar, ed., *Hilsnerova aféra a česká společnost 1899–1999*, 49–57.

[84] Miloš Pojar, 'Masarykova návštěva Palestíny v roce 1927' (Masaryk's Visit to Palestine in 1927), in Pojar, ed., *Hilsnerova aféra a česká společnost 1899–1999*, 138–143. Soukupová, 'T. G. Masaryk a židé (Židé), židé (Židé) a T. G. Masaryk: legenda a skutečnost', 113–125.

[85] Soukupová, 'T. G. Masaryk a židé (Židé), židé (Židé) a T. G. Masaryk: legenda a skutečnost', 113–125.

[86] Ibid. 120.

Czechs.[87] Many people believed in assimilation and integration within the Czech and Slovak nations. Dismissing the arguments favouring Jewish emigration from Czechoslovakia,[88] some members of the Jewish community appealed for funds earmarked for Palestinian settlement to be diverted in favour of charitable works for poor Jews in Czechoslovakia.[89] They promoted integration within the Czech nation, identification with its culture, language and ethos,[90] while distancing themselves from those who were determined to remain separate and uphold the heritage of their 'lost' homelands.[91] Jewish communists also distanced themselves from Zionism.[92]

Despite these divisions, Jewish life appeared to reach its apex in the interwar period with a variety of organizations and parties being established. As far as the political landscape was concerned, Czechoslovak Jews were well represented, not only as members of the Jewish Party but of other parties as well. There were altogether thirty Jewish politicians and trade union representatives, including two Jewish women MPs in the Czechoslovak parliament.[93]

In the economic sphere many Jews were engaged in commerce, banking, transport and the free professions.[94] Jewish representation in the cultural domain and academia was also impressive. As in other parts of Europe, the number of Jewish writers, journalists and academics who achieved acclaim amongst the intellectual elite of the country was significant. In particular, Jewish writers and publishers greatly influenced the literary scene.[95] Many literary icons frequented the famous 'Friday Sessions' that took place on Friday evenings at the home of Karel Čapek,[96] one of the best-known writers in the country, with President Masaryk and Foreign Minister (and future President) Dr Edvard Beneš often amongst his guests.[97]

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[87] Soukupová, 'T. G. Masaryk a židé (Židé), židé (Židé) a T. G. Masaryk: legenda a skutečnost', 123.

[88] Marie Zahradníková, 'Palestina – země zaslíbená? Pohled českožidovských asimilantů a sionistů na Palestinu ve dvacátých letech' (Palestine – the Promised Land? Opinions of assimilated Czech Jews and the Zionists in the 1920s), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátych letech*, 77–95.

[89] Soukupová, 'Češi-Židé', 61.

[90] Zahradníková, 'Palestina – země zaslíbená? Pohled českožidovských asimilantů na Palestinu ve dvacátých letech', 71–75.

[91] Čapková, *Češi*, *Němci*, *Židé?*, 66–67. Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokráciou a Slovenským štátom v stredoeurópskom kontexte*, 14–15.

[92] Jan Láníček, *Arnošt Frischer andthe Jewish Politics of Early 20th-Century Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 36.

[93] W. J. Bruegel, 'Jews in Political Life', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. II, 243–252.

[94] Čermáková, 'Československá republika – nový stat ve Středni Evropě a Židé', 15.

In the early interwar years Czechoslovakia stood out as an example of tolerance towards its Jewish population.[98] Given the history of centuries' long animosity towards Jews, the transformation that took place in the country's mindset was notable. Antisemitism appeared to be no longer an integral feature of Jewish life. During the 1920s Czechoslovakia occupied a unique position in the new geo-political landscape in Central and Eastern Europe. All of this was to change in the 1930s as the country became vulnerable to new waves of political trends, particularly those pursued by its powerful neighbours.

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[95] Egon Hostovský, 'Participation in Modern Czech Literature', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. I, 439–453.

[96] Karel Čapek was Czechoslovakia's most loved writer. He was the author who coined the word 'robot', the only Czech word that has gained a place in modern parlance worldwide.

[97] Miloš Pojar, 'Židovští účastníci Čapkových pátků a jejich osudy' (Jewish participants in Čapek's Fridays and their fate), in Jan Tydlitát, ed., *Pátečníci a Karel Poláček*, Symposium at Rychnov nad Kněžnou, May 2001 (Boskovice: Albert, 2001), 59–65.

[98] Kieval, *Formování českého židovstva*, 274–294.

CHAPTER 2

The Rise of Fascism and National Socialism

> Czechoslovakia was the most considerable factor in the Central European picture, and because this was the case, her role as the butt of German ill-temper fixes her well in the eye of any student addressing himself to Central European affairs and their repercussions.[1]
>
> — ARTHUR C. MORGAN (1938)

Towards the End of a Promising Beginning

Following its establishment, the Czechoslovak Republic faced a number of challenges. Functioning as a parliamentary democracy, the state was engaged in search of a modus vivendi amongst its multicultural population. This was a formidable task, given the status quo of the various ethnic groups that were hostile to it since its inception.[2] Therefore, the prospect of a successful resolution of intra-national conflicts in Czechoslovakia seemed unlikely. The psychological effects of losing power to a former servant nation also hampered the government's efforts to stabilize the country. During that period, anti-German and anti-Austrian feelings amongst the Czechs ran high, matched by the fierce resentment of the German and Austrian landed gentry towards the Czechs.[3] This group was deeply distressed by the land reform that came into effect in 1919, as a result of which considerable expanses of their vast estates were expropriated. This land was to be parcelled off and distributed to landless peasants, veterans of the First World War and returning emigrants.[4] This act was strongly opposed by the former hierarchy because they considered it an act of robbery and an affront to their honour. The lengthy and complex process of land redistribution resulted in the decline of wealth which had been based on land ownership. Although the Germans and Austrians affected by this land reform were permitted to retain up to 500 hectares of arable and forest land as well as being entitled to apply for reimbursement for losses incurred, the compensation offered by the new government was not deemed commensurate.[5] Interestingly, related industries – such as timber and sugar factories, breweries, distilleries, as well as hospitality businesses – were only marginally affected by expropriation. This became an important issue as these establishments were to a large extent owned by Jewish entrepreneurs.[6] A similar process affected the Hungarian landowners in Slovakia.

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[1] Arthur C. Morgan, 'Central Europe, A Blurred International Horizon', *Australian Quarterly* 10/1 (1938), 84–92.

[2] Antoine Marès, 'Mocenské a lidové transformace v Československu 1933–1948' (Power enacted and popular transformations in Czechoslovakia 1933–1948), in Jan Šedivý et al., eds, *1938: Československo a krize demokracie ve střední Evropě ve 30. a 40. letech XX. století* (*1938*: *Czechoslovakia and the Crisis of Democracy in Central Europe in the 1930s and 1940s of the XX Century*) (Prague: Institute of History, 2010), 205.

However, compared to land reforms that took place in other European countries, the process in Czechoslovakia was in fact less radical. As well as elements of the Czech population, landless German tenants and poor German foresters were also beneficiaries. Elizabeth Wiskemann, a British journalist, historian and diplomat notes that the land reform, essential as it was to the economic development of the new republic, was a matter that was fiercely fought over by opposing chauvinist groups.[7] This problem, as will be discussed later, was one of the core issues that influenced political developments in Czechoslovakia during the 1930s.

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[3] Věra Olivová, *The Doomed Democracy: Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe 1914–1938* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972), 94–97.

[4] Lucy Elizabeth Textor, *Land Reform in Czechoslovakia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1923), 19–24.

[5] Ibid. 99–109.

[6] Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. 1, 379–380.

[7] Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans: A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 147–166. Wiskemann was well acquainted with events in Germany and the Sudetenland.

Another major conflict between the Czech- and German-speaking populations was the contentious language issue. Education in one language could sway the national affiliation of future generations at the expense of others. Aware of the complex ethno-political situation prevailing in the country, Masaryk made clear his desire to extend his hand to the country's minorities. He recognized that retention of language was one factor in the creation and maintenance of their cultural identity. His intention to create a state that was egalitarian for all its citizens found expression in the constitution that came into effect in 1920, which included the 'Protection of National Religious and Racial Minorities'. It provided protection for the country's minorities, including allowing them the use of their own languages in the courts. Where an ethnic minority made up at least 20 per cent of the region's population, their rights were thus safeguarded. Under the constitution judges were obliged to give their judgments in Czech or Slovak, as well as in the language of the minority, depending on the ethnic makeup of the region.[8] Masaryk attempted to create a 'liberal constitution based on the principle of civic equality without consideration of race, language or religion'.[9]

However, Masaryk's ideal was not so easily adopted in practice. Despite his best intentions it became clear that following the establishment of the republic, many Czechs in fact took over leading positions previously held by Germans. On their side, the Germans appear to have also been demonstrably disinterested in becoming part of the new Czechoslovak establishment.[10] This state of affairs became increasingly problematic when Czech officials were authorized to deal with problems affecting Germans settled in the Sudetenland who considered such Czech control to be intolerable.

The British historian Mark Cornwall, in his recent book *The Devil's Wall*, has also drawn attention to the efforts and activities of German youth leaders in the Sudetenland following the defeat of Germany and Austria in the First World War and the involuntary inclusion of the area in a Slavic state. He notes that they resolved to awaken pride amongst their followers in terms of their German heritage and to promote the attraction of German racial purity and the ideal of the unification of all Germans in one German state. Their struggle aimed at resurrecting German nationalism which had been heavily bruised in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Cornwall portrays the Sudeten Germans as victims of alleged Czechoslovak discriminatory policies. Moreover, by emphasizing the problematic relationship between the Czechs and the Slovaks, he comes to the conclusion that the perception of a united, democratic Czechoslovakia was illusionary.[11] As an apologist for the Sudeten German support for Hitler his arguments challenge the accepted historiography of this period.[12]

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[8] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 60.

[9] Ibid. 54–57.

[10] Ibid. 66.

Yet, in spite of all the criticism levelled at the Czechoslovak leadership for alleged discrimination against its ethnic minorities,[13] Czechoslovakia nevertheless seems to have had no rivals in Central and Eastern Europe when it came to tolerance, freedom of expression and civil liberties. Indeed, the fact that many refugees from Eastern Europe found sanctuary in Czechoslovakia is testimony to the country's moral criteria and values.[14] However, the issues that determined the course of Czechoslovakia's downward slide in the 1930s were exacerbated in 1929, when the country, like the rest of the world, was plunged into the Great Depression. Over the subsequent three years, as its economy began to recover, Czechoslovakia's geographic position in the centre of Europe made it vulnerable to Germany.

Hitler's ascent to power in 1933 and the implementation of totalitarian measures in Germany did raise concerns in Czechoslovakia. Although alarmed by the onset of Jewish persecution in Germany, most Jews in the new state remained calm in the knowledge that they were citizens of Czechoslovakia, as described by Hedvika Novotná.[15] While the question of national identity was still a matter for discussion in the 1930s nevertheless, there was a distinct movement towards identification as Czechoslovak citizens. In many cases, despite the fact that German continued to be spoken within the family, increasing contact with the Czech-speaking population outside the home did exert a significant influence, particularly on the younger generation. The process of developing a sense of belonging and pride of being part of the Czechoslovak state was further enhanced by a sense of loyalty to President Masaryk. In terms of the Jewish population in particular, Novotná elaborates on the significant decline of religious observance and notes that the process of Jewish assimilation continued in the interwar period. Attendance at cultural events, holidays, visits with relatives and participation in sports activities were all important elements in the assimilation process.

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[11] Mark Cornwall, *The Devil's Wall* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[12] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 319–320.

[13] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). Doležal, 'Obraz nepřítele v české národní ideologii', 16–23.

[14] William V. Wallace, *Czechoslovakia* (London and Tonbridge: Ernest Benn Limited, 1977), 148–150.

[15] Hedvika Novotná, 'Židé vzpominají na masarykovské Československo třicátých let' (Jews remember Masaryk's Czechoslovakia of the 1930s), in Miloš Pojar, Blanka

Interestingly, in terms of political association in the 1930s, it appears that the same divisions that existed in other sections of society were strangely absent. Barriers between Jews and non-Jews appear to have been non-existent amongst the communists, social democrats, the Czech avant-garde and German refugees who were primarily responsible for drawing attention to developments in Nazi Germany and appealing for action.[16] Jewish and non-Jewish communists in Czechoslovakia responded in significant numbers by volunteering to join the international brigades in the Spanish civil war, where they confronted the fascist forces of Spain, Italy and Germany.

In Slovakia, the pace of change was slower, but the Slovak ethnologist Peter Salner[17] maintains that the life of Jews in Slovakia in the 1930s did begin to change. Integration into Czechoslovakia in 1918 had been initially

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Soukupová and Marie Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve třicátých letech* (*Jewish Minority in Czechoslovakia in the Thirties*) (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2004), 73–82. See also Gloria Frydman, *What a Life: A Biography of Paul Morawetz* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1995); Jiří Kosta, *Život mezi úzkostí a nadějí* (*Life between fear and hope*) (Prague, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2002); and Arnošt Lustig, *Zpověď* (*The Confession*) (Multisonic a. s., 2008).

[16] Eduard Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1913–1945* (*Memories 1913–1945*) (Prague: Nakladatelství G plus G, 2003), 87–107.

[17] Peter Salner, 'Medzi demokráciou a holokaustem, Židia na Slovensku v tridsiatych rokoch 20. storočia' (Between democracy and the Holocaust, Jews in Slovakia in the 1930s of the Twentieth Century), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve třicátých letech*, 83–95.

frowned upon, but by the beginning of the 1930s Slovak Jews came to appreciate the democratic system of the state, which made them citizens. They became active in diverse organizations and political parties, including religious, communist and Zionist organizations.[18] Others espoused Slovak values and culture in an attempt to assimilate.[19]

Nevertheless, towards the end of the 1930s, with the rise of fascism in Slovakia, many Jews began to feel the effects of antisemitism. For example, Jewish university students were sometimes ostracized by other students. In addition, some sporting clubs refused to accept Jewish sports enthusiasts as members.[20] This trend gradually increased from the middle of the 1930s onwards.[21]

As mentioned above the Czechslovak Republic faced a great many challenges. However, the most significant catalyst for the decline of Czechoslovakia as a nation was the rise of fascism between the wars in Europe. Fascism, with its goal of undermining the constitutional and parliamentary foundation of the state,[22] appealed to members of the European ultra-right in Italy, Germany, Rumania, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Spain and Portugal. During the 1930s, most countries on the European continent saw the emergence of fascist organizations in their political orbits.[23] The growth of fascism resulted from a number of different factors: the loss of territories and national humiliation; the fall of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian monarchies; the impact of the Bolshevik revolution; and the spread of leftist ideology. These factors all influenced the call to arms with which the fascist movement galvanized masses suffering from widespread deprivations.

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[18] Ibid. 84.

[19] Ibid. 85.

[20] Novotná, 'Židé vzpominají na masarykovské Československo třicátých let', 80.

[21] Salner, 'Medzi demokráciou a holokaustem, Židia na Slovensku v tridsiatych rokoch 20. storočia', 89.

[22] Miroslav Gregorovič, *Kapitoly of českém fašismu: Fašismus jako měřítko politické dizorientace* (*Chapters on Czech Fascism: Fascism as a Yardstick of Political Disorientation*) (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 1995), 10.

[23] Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1913–1945*, 66.

Furthermore, dissatisfaction with national liberalism, the impact of the short-lived left-led revolutions in Germany and Hungary, as well as the collapse of the economy in 1929, resulted in increased efforts by proponents of fascism to bring to power autocratic regimes that would restore order by the use of force.[24]

Czechoslovakia was not out of reach of fascist elements either. Masaryk categorized the first fascist organization, established in 1922, in 1926 as 'a yardstick of political disorientation'. He was aware that other parties were undergoing their own crisis and he believed that 'fascism was the pathological sludge seeping through the crisis of national democracy'.[25] In order to understand the phenomenon of the emergence of fascism in Czechoslovakia, it is necessary to identify the three different streams of the movement that began in the country. Apart from bearing the common hallmarks of ultra-right extremism and virulent antisemitism, the movements based their programmes on issues that were attractive to followers and relevant to their respective regions: the Czech Lands, Slovakia and the Sudetenland.

Unlike the National Socialist movement in Germany, the Czech ultra-right was represented by numerous organizations. Between 1922 and 1945 no less than forty indigenous fascist groups were active in the land. While all of these organizations pursued antisemitic policies, six made antisemitism central to their platform: the Aryan Working Front, the Aryan Guard, the Czech Aryan Front, the National Aryan Cultural Unity, the Anti-Jewish League and the Czech Aryan Movement. These organizations often gathered members of certain guilds and professional groups together. Their thirteen periodicals, disseminated throughout the country, were prime examples of gutter journalism written in crass Czech.[26] Their press became very active after the Munich Agreement had been implemented and the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic came into being in October 1938.[27]

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[24] Ibid. 13.

[25] Ibid. 12–13.

[26] Blanka Soukupová, 'Český antisemitismus ve dvacátých letech 20. století: Antisemitismus jako složka české identity'? (Czech Antisemitism in the 1920s: Antisemitism as part of Czech identity?), in Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve dvacátých letech*, 43–45.

In contrast to what was happening in Germany and in spite of the number of Czech fascist organizations, prior to the breakup of Czechoslovakia late in 1938, the activities of these groups surprisingly did not impact greatly on the country's political fabric. Their rejection of Masaryk's humanism and his dedication to the principles of a pluralistic democracy, was a major factor in their failure to make inroads into the mainstream of Czech society and thus they remained on the periphery of Czech politics until 1938.

Where the Czech and German fascists also differed was in pursuing their own brands of nationalism. The Germans professed racial superiority over the Czechs while the Czech fascists stood firm in their hostility towards the Germans. However, both groups targeted Jews: the Germans for daring to identify with German heritage and the Czechs for their German linguistic and cultural affiliation. Both groups saw in them the eternal enemy of humankind irrespective of their national aspirations.[28]

Slovakia also experienced a flare up of fascist activity at this time, although the situation differed significantly from what was happening in Bohemia and Moravia. The Slovak fascist movement was somehow able to draw more widely on popular support amongst the population. In contrast to the numerous Czech fascist organizations, only two ultranationalist parties came into being in Slovakia: the People's National Party, founded in 1918 (which in 1938 was responsible for creating the paramilitary Hlinka Guards), and the Rodobrana, established in 1923.[29] What appealed to the Slovak population were the political programmes of the parties: both the struggle for Slovak independence and militant antisemitism. In the forefront of these organizations stood Andrej Hlinka (1864–1938), a Catholic priest and founder of the Hlinka Slovak People's Party (HSL'S), Vojtěch Tuka (1880–1946), the founder of the Rodobrana, and Jozef Tiso

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[27] Gregorovič, *Kapitoly o českém fašismu*, 91–118.

[28] Ibid. 79–81.

[29] Yeshayahu Jellinek, 'Storm Troopers in Slovakia: The Rodobrana and the Hlinka Guards', *Journal of Contemporary History* 6/3 (1971), 97–119.

(1887–1947), a Catholic priest and academic. Slovak fascists cooperated closely with fascist organizations in Hungary, Croatia and Rumania. In contrast to the Czech fascist movement, they also developed a close relationship with the German Nazis.[30]

In the Sudetenland, the fascist movement became a decisive factor in the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Not surprisingly, the region's Jewish population was ostracized. The roots of militant antisemitism in the Sudetenland can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when German nationalists (Georg von Schönerer, Hans Knirsch, Hans Krebs and Rudolf Jung) resolved to rid the area of Jewish influence. The confrontation with Czech authorities came to a head when the Jewish Professor of History, Samuel Steinherz (1857–1943), was proposed as rector of the German university in Prague. Nevertheless, in spite of protests from all German political parties, including the social democrats, Steinherz did become rector for the academic year 1922/1923.[31]

During this period two chauvinist parties can be observed as already active in Czechoslovakia, although they were disbanded by the Czechoslovak government in 1933. They were then resurrected in the same year as the Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront, which was renamed the Sudetendeutsche Partei (SdP) in April 1935. Hitler's programme for the rejuvenation of the German Volk, which had already been adopted by Sudeten German youth leaders in the 1920s,[32] was further promoted by Konrad Henlein, who emerged as leader of the party.

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[30] Carol Skalnik Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918–1987*, 51. NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Kamenec, *On the Trail of Tragedy*, 26–32. Eduard Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokráciou a Slovenským štátom v stredoeuvropskom kontexte*, 4–19. See also Rothkirchen, 'Slovakia: II, 1918–1938', 111–118.

[31] Alena Míšková, 'Židé v Sudetech: Od Schönerera ke genocidě' (The Jews in the Sudetenland: From Schönerer to genocide). Paper presented at the Conference on the Jews in the Sudetenland in the light of historical research and testimonials, Pilsen, 19 January 1998.

[32] Cornwall, *The Devil's Wall*.

In terms of economic instability the Great Depression added to the disaffection felt by the Sudeten German population as did their belief in Czech discrimination following the land distribution reforms of the 1920s.[33] The area's prosperity depended on its export-oriented industries, the production of which ceased during the Depression, causing widespread unemployment and sparking further support for German nationalism.[34] The German historian Eva Hahn[35] argues that the phenomenon of Sudeten German affinity, which manifestly indicated geographical location and kinship, in reality signified affiliation to a political movement. From its inception, this movement was 'anti-democratic, antisemitic, anti-liberal, anti-socialist and anti-western' to quote Hans Henning Hahn.[36]

Henlein's SdP enjoyed widespread support amongst the population. In an outpouring of German national pride, based on their belief that they inhabited ancient German lands, the Sudetan German population demanded annexation by Germany. In an effort to impress on the Czechoslovak government the strength of their demands, the 'Freikorps', the armed wing of the movement, began perpetrating acts of terrorism. These were targeted against local Jews, democratic opponents to their campaign and members of Czechoslovak armed forces, as well as Czech civilians.[37]

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 104–105, 191–192.

[35] Eva Hahn, 'Mnichov v kontextu (sudeto) německých dějin, Mnichov 1938 a česká společnost' (Munich in the context of (Sudeten) German history), *Sborník z mezinárdoního sympozia k 70. výročí mnichovské dohody* (Prague: Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, 2008), 19–35.

[36] Hans Henning Hahn, 'Oldenburský projekt sudetoněmeckých dějin, Základní otázky a oblasti výzkumu' (The Oldenbourg Project of Sudeten German history. Basic questions and sections of research), *Sborník z mezinárdoního sympozia k 70. výročí mnichovské dohody* (*Proceedings of the international symposium in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Munich Agreement*) (Prague: The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, 2008), 7–17.

[37] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a repatriace, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 161. One of the first actions of the Sudeten German Nazis was the assassination of the prominent German Jewish émigré, Professor Theodor Lessing, in Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad) in August 1933.

Henlein and his associates based their propaganda on allegations that the Czechoslovak government was deliberately inflicting hardship on the German population, while at the same time providing more generous welfare assistance to regions inhabited by the Czech population. By emphasizing that the Sudeten Germans were victims of all-encompassing discriminatory policies imposed on the region by the Prague government, Henlein and members of his party were able to gather a large following of ethnic Germans. Their followers were also impressed by Germany's economic recovery after the war and the apparent rise in living standards of the German population, which they attributed to powerful political measures adopted by the National Socialist state. Importantly, the presence of a large and predominantly prosperous Jewish population in their midst gave rise to Sudeten German support of antisemitic measures introduced in Germany. In fact, Hitler's hatred of the Czechs was fundamental in strengthening the SdP's position in the region and its determination to overrule and invalidate Czech authority in the area. As a result, the increasing popularity of Henlein's demands, aimed at disenfranchising Czechoslovakia, became a cause of major concern for the Czech government.[38]

During elections held in May 1935, the SdP gained 80 per cent of the German vote, making it the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia.[39] Henlein received full funding for his party's activities from Berlin and plans to take over the Sudetenland were set in place so as to establish a vanguard for Hitler's encroachment on foreign territory.[40] In August 1935, Henlein embarked on his first trip to London to sell his anti-Czech propaganda to the British. It was a successful tour in which he made contact with Graham Christie, the former air attaché at the British Embassy in Berlin, with whose assistance he was able, during subsequent trips, to gain access to officials at the Foreign Office.[41] Pretending that he was a loyal Czechoslovak citizen who was interested in engaging with the Czechoslovak government in negotiations aimed at recognizing the 'legitimate' aspirations of its German minority, he repeated the claim, this time to the British, that he had no contacts with Berlin. The purpose of his visits to London was to draw the attention of the British to the alleged persecution of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechs. In London, Henlein's missions met with success. Given that the British were already interested in strengthening mutual Anglo-German relations, Henlein's 'briefing' on the situation in the Sudetenland provided an opportunity for the British to further develop their relationship with the German government. Gaining British sympathy for the Sudeten German cause was of primary importance to Hitler. With the help of Henlein he succeeded in outmanoeuvring the Czech government and steering British policies towards the German side of the dispute without raising suspicions about his true intentions. It is interesting to speculate on why these tactics, aimed at suppressing the Sudeten German social democrats and reducing the Czech hegemony in the area, when combined with the anti-Jewish propaganda waged by the SdP in Czechoslovakia, did not alert British officials to the reality that Henlein was, in fact, an agent in the service of the German government.[42]

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[38] Sheila Grant Duff, *Europe and the Czechs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1938), 97.

[39] Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1913–1945*, 77.

[40] Harrison S. Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 378.

[41] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 127–147.

The German Social Democratic Workers' Party (DSAP), established in September 1919, stood in opposition to Henlein. Not unlike right-wing parties, which forged links with those in other countries, the German social democrats in Czechoslovakia shared the same political platform with their counterparts in the Czech Lands. The DSAP's initial demands for national autonomy in Czechoslovakia gave way to recognition of the new state and the party became an integral part of the country's political structure. Its members then became known as 'activists'. However, relations between the Czech and German social democratic parties were not always cohesive. The German social democrats were themselves involved in an internal struggle, which resulted in a split within the ranks of the DSAP. Following this split the radical wing of the party joined the communist movement.

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[42] Ibid.

Nevertheless, between 1920 and 1938, thirty-nine German social democrats were represented in the Czechoslovak parliament.[43]

As a result of the elections of 1929 the Sudeten German social democrats came to be represented in the government by Dr Ludwig Czech.[44] Another German in the Czechoslovak government was Professor Robert Mayr-Harting who became Minister of Justice.[45] A third representative was Wenzel Jaksch, who was elected to the Czechoslovak National Assembly in 1929. He was one politician who was keenly aware of the danger the National Socialists posed. He was loyal to President Masaryk and stood by the Czech nation during a crucial test for the survival of the Czechoslovak state, stating that it was important that 'this last democratic island should not perish in the sea of Central European fascism'.[46]

To Henlein and his supporters, Jaksch was a traitor while to the Czechs and Slovaks he was viewed as a German chauvinist. In his bid to defend the Czechoslovak regime, Jaksch travelled to Britain to counter Henlein's claims of Czech persecution of his people. Unfortunately, he failed to convince the British and, with growing anxiety, also noted the tendency of the Czechoslovak leadership to ignore the positive contribution to the Czechoslovak cause pursued by his party. By disregarding Jaksch's insistence on the need for increasing welfare support and enabling greater participation of Germans in the civil service, the Czechs played into Henlein's hands. The problem became more obvious after the promised 500 million Czech crowns, requested by Jaksch for improvement of living standards in the region, were not delivered due to bureaucratic mismanagement.[47] The DSAP was then further weakened by an internal struggle within its leadership and the merger of two powerful Sudeten German organizations with Henlein's SdP.[48]

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[43] Klaus Sator, 'Německá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická v Československé republice' (The German Social Democratic Workers' Party in the Czechoslovak Republic), in Stanislav Kokoška and Thomas Oellermann, eds, *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi* (*Sudeten Germans Against Hitler*) (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2008), 18–29. While members of the Hungarian minority were represented in the parliament they were opposed to participation in the government. See Thomson, *Czechoslovakia in European History*, 331.

[44] Dr Ludwig Czech was given the portfolio of Social Welfare, later Public Affairs and finally Public Health and Welfare. His efforts to secure welfare assistance for Sudeten Germans during the economic crisis were crucial. Czech was a Sudeten German Jew who perished during the Holocaust in Terezín in 1942.

[45] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 82. Robert Mayr-Harting was Minister of Justice.

[46] Martin Bachstein, 'Wenzel Jaksch a sudetoněmecká sociální demokracie' (Wenzel Jaksch and the Sudeten German Democracy), in Kokoška and Oellermann, eds, *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi*, 30–44.

When Henlein established his position as head of the Nazi movement in 1933 in Czech border areas, a wave of terror was unleashed in the Sudetenland.[49] The SdP targeted Jews, members of the DSAP and other elements of the Czech population in the region they perceived to be threats to their power. As a result, during 1938, Sudeten German opponents to the SdP, together with sections of the Jewish and Czech populations in the area began to leave the region.[50] Fleeing at first to the interior of Czechoslovakia, within the following twelve months they were looking for alternative havens. One of the countries they attempted to gain admission to was Australia.

As a result of the Nazi takeover in Germany in 1933, leaders and members of opposition parties banned by the Nazis, as well as writers, artists, journalists and intellectuals, including many Jews, sought to escape into Czechoslovakia. For these refugees, Czechoslovakia appeared to be an obvious sanctuary: it shared a long mountainous border with Germany that was easy to cross, the country's population was bilingual,[51] German education, culture, literature and journalism were all available, interaction between intellectuals of both countries was longstanding, and freedom of the press was at this stage guaranteed. Importantly, there were no visa requirements.[52] From 1935, when statistics began to be recorded, an estimated 62,716[53] refugees from Germany crossed the border. This number is probably much higher in reality because many refugees did not register with the authorities.[54]

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[47] Ibid. 42. The parties were The Union of German Farm Workers and The German Christian Volkspartei.

[48] Christof Schafranek, 'Poslední fáze sociálně demokratického boje proti sudetoněmecké straně na jaře a v létě 1938' (The last phase of the Sudeten German struggle against the Sudeten German Party in the Spring and Summer of 1938), in Kokoška and Oellermann, eds, *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi*, 45–60. See also NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Letter from Basil Newton to Viscount Halifax, 10 February 1939.

[49] Ralf Gebel, 'Odvrácená strana jásotu: pronásledování a terror' (The reverse side of jubilation: persecution and terror), in Kokoška and Oellermann, eds, *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi*, 75–87.

[50] Peter Heumos, 'Mnichovská dohoda a počátky emigrace z Československa' (The Munich Agreement and the onset of emigration from Czechoslovakia), in Kokoška and Oellermann, eds, *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi*, 61–74.

The influx of asylum seekers put the Czechoslovak government in a difficult position. For years the government had been committed to assisting refugees from the Soviet Union,[55] but it was now threatened by Sudeten German National Socialists within its own borders. Adding to the complexity was the reality that the first wave of refugees from Nazi Germany began to arrive during the Great Depression. At this stage the United States, Canada, Latin America and many of the other European states were not willing to accept migrants, while Palestine was out of reach for most.[56] The government of Czechoslovakia therefore found itself in the unenviable situation of having to both respond to, and deal with, refugees from outside its borders, innocent people who were fleeing persecution and atrocity, while its own political situation was in some turmoil. Yet, the country did extend a welcoming hand to those escaping intimidation and maltreatment. To the German refugees in particular Prague became the place where they were able to integrate with relative ease. More often than not, families who had been left behind were subsequently able to join those who had already fled.

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[51] Michal Frankl, 'Mezi blahovůlí a svévolí. Politika Československa vůči uprchlíkům před nacismem' (Between complacence and wilfulness: The policies of Czechoslovakia towards refugees from Nazism), *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (2008), 34–37.

[52] Kateřina Čapková and Michal Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště: Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem 1933–1938* (*Precarious refuge: Czechoslovakia and refugees from Nazism 1933–1938*) (Prague, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2008), 26.

[53] Ibid. 30–33.

[54] Ibid. 30.

[55] Ibid. 37.

[56] Ibid. 38, 39. See also David Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938–1941* (Amherst: University of Nebraska Press, 1968); Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (London: University of California Press, 1995); Graciela Ben-Dror, *The Catholic Church and the Jews: Argentina 1933–1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Marie Zahradníková, 'Palestina – útočiště pro evropské Židy nebo nepřijatelné "orientální dobrodružství" sionistů'? (Palestine – a refuge for European Jews or an unacceptable 'oriental adventure' of Zionists?), in Pojar,

However, there were nevertheless still some serious obstacles to integration. The most important of these was the ability of refugees to secure a livelihood.[57] With the exception of a few prominent personalities, mainly well-known writers, artists and journalists who were permitted to work for the local German press,[58] most German refugees were dependent on the meagre financial assistance provided by refugee organizations.[59] These came into existence in response to the rising refugee problem. Jewish refugee organizations were organized by various Jewish communities that were consequently united under the auspices of the Jewish Committee for Assistance. Organizations belonging to political movements (social democrats, the communists) also created their own refugee committees.[60]

While the Czechoslovak authorities were sympathetic to the plight of the refugees and understood that most of them escaped without resources or money the government itself did not contribute financially to the plight of those who escaped. Instead they made public appeals for contributions, particularly funds, to assist. The response of Czechoslovak citizens was initially spontaneous and generous. The Democratic Care for Refugees, the Social Democratic Committee for Refugees, the Assistant Committee for the Self-Employed and the so-called Šalda Committee were all established

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Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve třicátých letech* (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2004).

[57] Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 147.

[58] Ibid. 102–106.

[59] Ibid. 113–114.

[60] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 259–264.

to assist refugees.[61] Moreover, President Masaryk and Foreign Minister Beneš made personal contributions from their own private funds.[62]

The aim of all these committees was to secure care for refugees, to help with the issue of permits for residence as well as the extension of permits for residence, to provide aid in gaining travel documents and finally in securing emigration visas for other countries with the help of the HICEM organization.[63] At the head of the Jewish Refugee Assistance Movement were refugee activists whose tireless dedication to help people in need went above the call of duty.[64]

The refugees and their supporters also faced opposition and some conflicting viewpoints. The right wing of Czechoslovakia's politics opposed the admission of refugee communists and Jews, while the leftist parties called for communists to be admitted and provided with generous economic support.[65] Some Czechs, mainly those who were politically active, accommodated refugees in their own homes, while others informed on them to the police. The life of a refugee in Czechoslovakia was thus wrought with difficulties, conditioned by fear of the future and often facing hostile attitudes from certain sections of the population, right-wing politicians and elements of the media. They were also many who were dependent on the assistance provided by refugee organizations.[66]

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[61] Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 115–137.

[62] Kateřina Čapková, 'Několik tváří exilu v ČSR, každodenní péče of uprchlíky před nacismem' (Diverse views on exile in Czechoslovakia: Day-to-day care of refugees from Nazi Germany), *Dějiny a součastnost* 3 (2008), 30–33.

[63] Peter Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeruopa und dem Nahen Osten 1938–1945* (*Emigration from Czechoslovakia to Western Europe and the Middle East 1938–1945*) (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 47.

[64] The activists were Marie Šmolková, Hana Steinerová, Gisi Fleischmannová and Mathilde Treitscher.

[65] Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 42–43.

[66] Blanka Soukupová, 'Český antisemitismus v podmínkách pluralistické demokratické společnosti národního státu' (Czech antisemitism in a pluralist, democratic society of a nation state), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina v Československu ve třicátých letech*, 25.

Many refugees lived mostly in appalling conditions. They met in coffee houses where they could barely afford a cup of tea, sometimes only to read newspapers because they could not afford to buy them. However, the knowledge that they were not alone and were in fact in the company of people who were suffering the same ordeal, was comforting and often encouraging. Čapková gives the example of John Heartfield who came to Prague after a dramatic escape from Germany and was reunited with his brother Wieland in one of Prague's coffee houses.[67]

In the later part of the 1930s, the situation of the refugees became more precarious. Czechoslovakia came to see itself as a transit country[68] and it therefore became crucial for the government to find countries that would be willing to absorb the onward movement of this growing number of refugees.[69] In order to take control of the situation, Czechoslovak authorities introduced a range of restrictions that limited the time the refugees were permitted to remain in the country and determined the location where they could stay, for which the refugees had to obtain permission and secure valid travel documents. Given that many refugees did not possess a valid passport, the struggle to obtain at least a temporary Czechoslovak travel document, which did not entitle them to Czechoslovak citizenship, became of primary importance.[70]

The discrimination against Jewish refugees in contrast to non-Jewish refugees became clear when the government made the decision to move the Jewish refugee community into districts in country areas, in particular the Bohemian-Moravian highlands.[71] However, there was also trouble brewing within the Jewish community itself. While many Czech Jewish and other activists were fully engaged in helping refugees,[72] trying to improve their

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[67] Čapková, 'Několik tváří exilu v ČSR', 150.

[68] Ibid. 111.

[69] Ibid. 332–333.

[70] Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 50–60.

[71] Ibid. 254–257.

[72] Šmolková sought legal assistance for refugees, Steinerová concentrated on re-skilling courses, Treischer was the head of Hilfskomité (Assistance Committee) and chairperson of a women's charity organization. See Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 124.

prospects for emigration,[73] a segment of Czech Jews expressed dissatisfaction with the support given to certain Jewish refugees whom they wished to get rid of as soon as possible. In particular, they took an uncompromising stand towards Rumanian Jewish refugees, whose presence in Slovakia was considered undesirable. The local Jewish community feared that the ever-increasing number of Jewish refugees, in particular from Poland, Rumania and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia would foster antisemitism.[74]

Kurt Grossmann, who worked for the League for Human Rights in Germany, was one who found refuge in Czechoslovakia. His experience in dealing with problems of persecuted people led to his nomination for the position of Secretary of the Democratic Care for Refugees in Prague.[75] After the war Grossmann recalled his experience in exile in Prague.[76] In essence, his experiences do not differ from Čapková and Frankl's descriptions, discussed above. He recounts the émigré's ordeal, the assistance provided by refugee organizations and the regulations set in motion by Czechoslovak authorities in an attempt to contain the situation: passport requirements, registration with police and the provision of residence permits. He also remembers the negative attitude towards illegal migrants. Grossmann dwells on the activities of the League of Nations, the negative role played by the Communist Party in refusing to become involved with the Jewish refugee crisis, and the evasive attitude of Soviet authorities towards individuals in search of asylum. However, he is careful not to criticize the handling of the crisis by the Czechoslovak government. Instead, he is careful to emphasize that 'there was no antisemitic movement in Bohemia during the Masaryk and Beneš administrations'.[77]

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[73] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a repatriace, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 161, Meeting of the committee for organizing re-skilling courses for refugees, 20 January 1939. At the meeting it was stressed that at this point in time only Jews and Germans qualified for emigration assistance.

[74] Čapková, *Češi, Němci, Židé?*, 168–174.

[75] Ibid. 121.

[76] Kurt R. Grossmann, 'Transition, Refugees to and from Czechoslovakia', in Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. II, 565–581.

[77] Ibid. 573.

At the other end of the spectrum there is the story of Manfred George, who in his essay 'Refugees in Prague 1933–1938'[78] provides a very different description of the situation in Czechoslovakia during the period in focus. A well-known journalist and writer of the Weimar Republic, he was welcomed in Prague and given support. He became the founder and editor of the *Jüdische Revue*. However, many writers, journalists and artists did in fact enjoy a different level of hospitality when compared to the other refugees. Walter Taub, Stefan Heym, Georg Szell, Oskar Maria Graf, Bruno Adler, Hanns Eisler and countless others were given privileges that were out of reach for most refugees. We also have the story of Hanuš Burger, a Jewish theatre and film producer who devoted his efforts to care for refugee playwrights and actors from Germany.[79]

Lenka Reinerová, a Czech German Jewish journalist, writer and staunch communist, likewise collected many of the refugee actors, writers, journalists and theatre producers around her. Her list of prominent refugees is the *Who's Who* of the pre-war cultural elite. She gives a very detailed account of the enormous wealth of intellectual and artistic values these people possessed and shared with their colleagues in Czechoslovakia. Although Reinerová's activities were bound to the left of Czechoslovak politics, she provides an accurate picture of the tribulations that émigré artists experienced in Germany and later Austria before reaching Czechoslovakia.[80]

Grossmann, Burger, Reinerová and George's stories are all testimony to Czechoslovakia's essentially positive role in the refugee crisis of the 1930s. While the country was struggling to reconstruct its own economy, the absorption of an ever-increasing influx of refugees was an additional challenge. It is therefore not surprising that some citizens were concerned about the human impact on the economy, the necessity to finance road and rail infrastructure, the need for border check points in the mountains, for military and air force bases, and also the need to contain the threat of 'in-house' National Socialism emanating from the Sudetenland as well as espionage directed from Berlin. In light of all of these concerns and in spite of any perceived shortcomings and adverse experiences of individuals, the government of Czechoslovakia under Masaryk and Beneš did its best to help people in distress despite its being a small country.

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[78] Rothkirchen, ed., *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. II, 582–588.

[79] Hanuš Burger, *Der Frühling war es wert*: *Erinnerungen* (*It was worth the Spring: Recollections*) (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1981).

[80] Lenka Reinerová, *Die Premiere: Erinnerungen an Einenen Denkwürdigen Theaterabend und andere Begebenheiten* (*The First Night: Recollections of a Memorable Evening at the Theatre and other Occasions*) (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1989).

In the midst of disquieting political developments in Central Europe, the eighty-five-year-old Masaryk resigned from the presidency on 14 December 1935 citing ill health. He passed away on 14 September 1937. As mourning crowds made their way up the hill to the Hradčany Castle to pay their last respects there was an atmosphere of fear for the future. In the words of Eduard Goldstücker 'there was darkness descending on an era.'[81] Less than two months after Masaryk's death, Hitler put forward his secret plan for Czechoslovakia's conquest 'with lightning speed', as documented in the Hossbach Protocol of 5 November 1937.[82] As Arthur C. Morgan, an Australian writer, noted in 1938, Czechoslovakia was to become the focal point of Central European politics. Four months later, in March 1938, Hitler incorporated Austria into the Third Reich. Two months after the Anschluss, in May 1938, Czechoslovakia ceased to be the unknown country. The worsening crisis in the Sudetenland, 'clandestinely' engineered by Hitler, as well as the support for the Sudeten cause shown by Britain, prompted Hitler to act and to demand the secession of the Sudetenland region to Germany.[83] Czechoslovakia was to become Hitler's next victim. In the months that followed, the efforts of Czechoslovakia's new president, Dr Edvard Beneš, and his government, which aimed at warding off German aggression and preserving Czechoslovakia's independence, became the focus of international politics. This was particularly because Hitler threatened to retaliate by unleashing a new global war if Czechoslovakia did not submit to his demands. Australia, far away from the centre of international politics, was not spared the anxiety that swept through the world.

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[81] Goldstücker, *Vzpomínky 1913–1945*, 91.

[82] Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 160.

[83] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 424–428.

CHAPTER 3

On Australia's Horizon

> Australians were telling us that God created their country last. He no longer had enough material left and so the country that came into being was poor and empty, bereft of high mountains and shady glades. Thus, the Creator took pity on Australia and bestowed upon her rich deposits of gold with which He embellished the most desolate parts of the land. This is why there is so much gold here and this is why it is necessary to look for gold in the wilderness, where there is nothing but sweltering heat, rocks and biting flies.
>
> —JIŘÍ BAUM (1935–1936)[1]

Australia–Czechoslovakia Contacts

With these words Dr Jiří Baum (1900–1944) describes Australia, a country that was largely unknown in Czechoslovakia in the early part of the twentieth century and which not many of his compatriots had ever visited. The Czech zoologist, however, was keen to explore the wealth of Australia's natural habitat. He therefore set out on a voyage of discovery with his wife Růžena, arriving in Fremantle in February 1935.

His mission was to collect and preserve samples of rare insects, butterflies and birds, before shipping them to the National Museum in Prague, where they became part of a collection of exotic specimens. In their air-cooled, four-wheel-driven campervan the Baums toured the length and breadth of Australia, giving lectures in Melbourne and Sydney, including radio broadcasts. Baum not only spoke about the couple's experiences in Australia, but also informed listeners about Czechoslovakia. His meetings with settlers and consular representatives were highly appreciated by the Czech community.[2]

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[1] Jiří Baum, *Okolo zeměkoule autem a lodi* (*Around the globe by automobile and boat*) (Brno: L. Marek, 2006). I am grateful to Dr Peter Baum for information about this book.

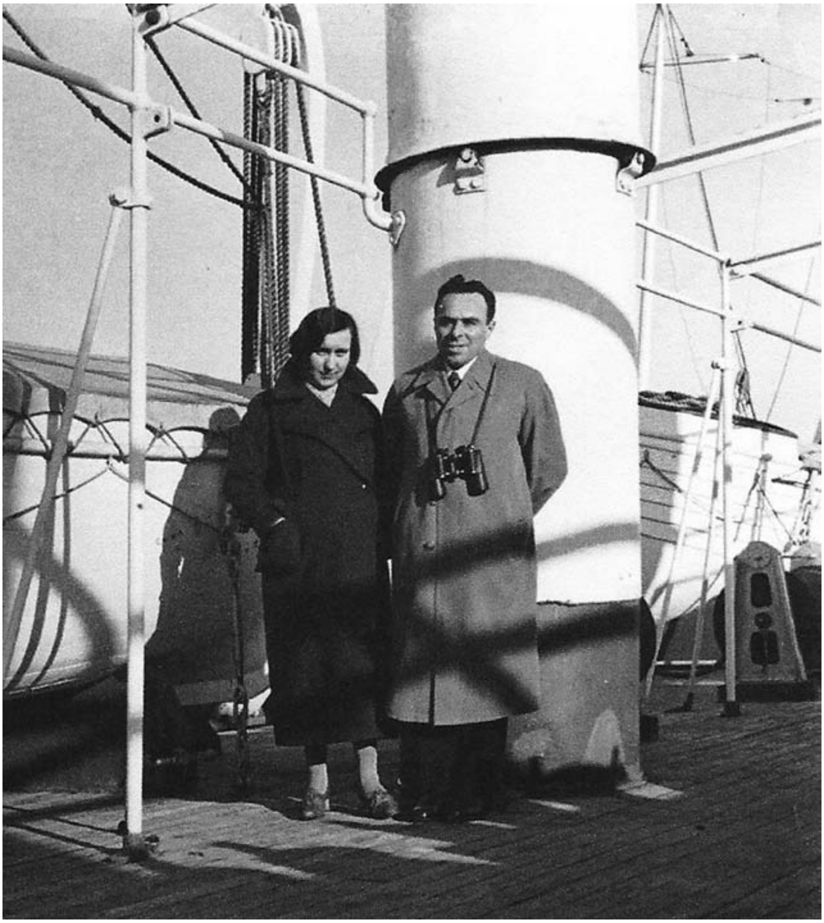

Figure 3.1: Dr Jiří and Růžena Baum. Source: Courtesy of Dr Peter Baum.

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[2] Ibid. 113, 114, 130, 131, 135.

Baum was not only interested in the scientific exploration of Australia; he also makes some excellent observations about its people, their customs and society. He expresses a hope that one day all Australians will realize that they are a fine nation, not a second-hand, cheaper version of the English. Then, in his opinion, they will be able to divest themselves of an unfortunate inferiority complex.[3] The reports and photographs of the Australian part of the Czech couple's world tour produced a unique and in depth account of life in Australia, particularly of the outback in the 1930s.[4] Baum's wife Růžena also published an important book under her maiden name Fikejzová, entitled *Austrálie očima ženy*.[5] The book provides an insight into Australia's social environment in the 1930s with particular emphasis on the position of women in the parochial environment of Australia's society during that period.

The Baums were, however, not the only Czechs to visit Australia. The first Czech settler was a convict by the name of Marek Blucher. After having served his term, he spent the rest of his life in Sydney.[6] In terms of twentieth-century visitors another important name is Josef Kořenský (1847–1938), a natural scientist who travelled extensively throughout Australia (1900–1901).[7] Very popular and highly respected in his time, Kořenský is little known nowadays. In addition, the Czech pianist Edward Goll (1884–1949)[8] was an acclaimed teacher of the keyboard at the Conservatorium in Melbourne at a time when there were not many world-class musicians in Australia. Another immigrant of renown was Edouard Borovanský who is credited with laying the foundations of the Australian Ballet.[9]

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[3] Ibid. 129.

[4] The Baums decided to return to Czechoslovakia in 1939 to participate in the resistance movement against the Germans. Their son Peter was born during the war. Jiří was arrested in 1943 and transported to Warsaw where he perished. Baum was posthumously honoured by the Czechoslovak government after the end of the Second World War with the Czechoslovak War Cross 1939.

[5] Růžena Fikejzová, *Austrálie očima ženy* (*Australia in the eyes of a woman*) (Prague: Česká grafická unie a.s., 1941).

[6] Amongst the Czechs who arrived in the nineteenth century were Dr Jan Lhotský, Josef Jilka, a group of Moravian Brethren, the land surveyor Čeněk Paclt, the gardener Alois Topič, missionaries Alois Kreissl, Bedřich Chmelíček and the singer Gabriela Roubalová who settled in Melbourne in 1892. See *History of Compatriots, Czechs in Australia*, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2002.

[7] Josef Kořenský wrote five books on his travels throughout Australia: *Austrálie* (*Australia)* (Prague: Štorch Publishers, 1903); *K protinožcům I* (*To the Antipodes I*) (Prague: Otto Publishers, 1907); *Plavba do Austrálie* (*Passage to Australia*) (Prague: Otto Publishers, 1907); *Na Labutí řece* (*On the Swan Lake*) (Prague: Otto Publishers, 1907); and *K protinožcům II* (*To the Antipodes II*) (Prague: Otto Publishers, 1919).

Dr Anton Breinl (1880–1944) was a medical scientist and pioneer in the field of tropical medicine. He was born in Vienna, but his family came from Bohemia. He studied in Chomutov and graduated from Charles University in Prague in 1904. During his travels to South America, New Guinea, the Thursday Islands and the Northern Territory of Australia, he devoted his efforts towards finding a cure for a range of tropical diseases. He became the first director of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville in 1909 and was awarded the Mary Kingsley medal for research in tropical medicine in 1910.[10] The Anton Breinl Centre is part of the medical school of the University of James Cook in Townsville.

To the average Czech citizen Australia was an exotic land at the far end of the world, while at the same time, to most Australians, Czechoslovakia was a distant place located somewhere in Europe. A few lines relating to Czechoslovakia appeared in the press from time to in the 1920s and the 1930s, but they do not appear to have generated much interest amongst the Australian population. However, a Czech Jewish journalist by the name of Egon Erwin Kisch (1850–1948) did make an impact on Australia's political life. Nicknamed the raging reporter, Kisch visited Australia at the same time as the Baums. His intention was to take part in a conference organized by the Movement Against War and Fascism. Kisch's arrival caused a sensation. The Australian government refused to allow him to step on Australian soil and in protest he leapt from the *Strathaird* in the port of Melbourne on 12 November 1934 and fractured his leg.

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[8] Mimi Colligan and H. J. Gibney, 'Goll, Edward', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1983), 45–46.

[9] Robin Grove, 'Borovansky, Edouard (1902–1959)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 13 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1993), 220–222.

[10] R. A. Douglas, 'Breinl, Anton (1880–1944)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 7 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979), 394–395.

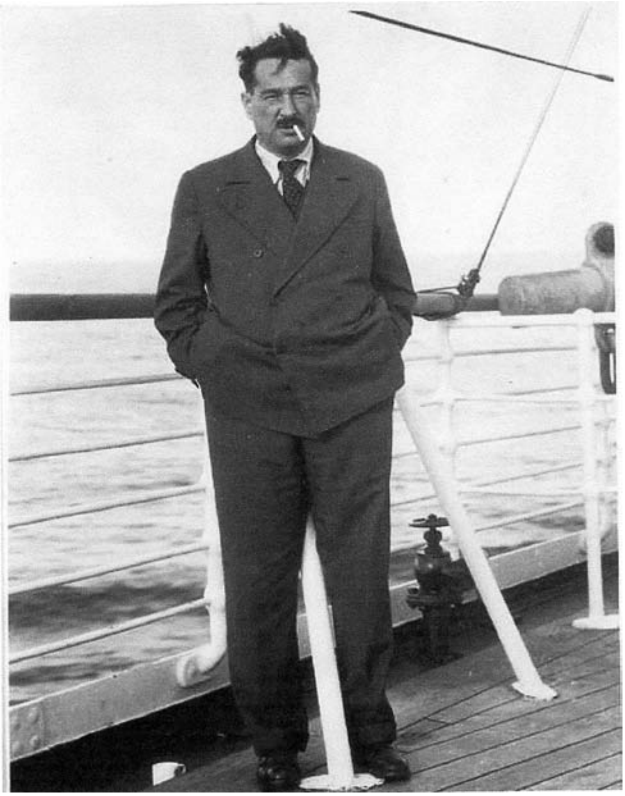

Figure 3.2: Egon Erwin Kisch. Source: Courtesy of the State Library of NSW.

Prime Minister Joseph Lyons and the Justice Minister Robert Menzies refused Kisch permission to land out of fear of communist agitation. Kisch came to present a report about his experience in a Nazi concentration camp in Germany, where he had been imprisoned after being falsely accused of taking part in a plot to set fire to the Reichstag. He was later permitted to stay in Australia until March 1935 under the condition that he refrain from political activities while in the country. His book *Australian Landfall* became a bestseller.[11]

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[11] Egon Erwin Kisch, *Australian Landfall* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1969). Translated from the German by John Fisher, Irene Fitzgerald and Kevin Fitzgerald;

In Australian official circles however, Czechoslovakia was not *terra incognita*. It is important to realize that Australian officialdom witnessed the birth of Czechoslovakia at Versailles on 28 June 1919. The Peace Conference[12] signalled the debut on the international scene for both countries: Australia, an independent federation since 1901 and Czechoslovakia, whose status as a newly created independent republic, was confirmed amongst others, by William (Billy) Morris Hughes, the Australian prime minister (1915–1923), and Sir Joseph Cook, the Australian Minister for the Navy in 1919 and briefly prime minister in 1915.[13]

It was the first time that Australia, one of the victorious powers of the First World War, signed an international treaty. Hughes confirmed Australia's new status in the world in Federal Parliament on 10 September 1919. When he recommended that parliament should ratify the Treaty of Versailles, he said: 'The Czecho-Slovaks have been recognized and the charter of their rights is embodied in this document'.[14]

Sir Joseph Cook was the British representative on the panel that deliberated on decisions concerning the establishment of Czechoslovakia. Discussing the new country's demarcation lines with Germany and Austria, Cook insisted that secure and defensible mountainous borders of Czechoslovakia (bordering Germany), the coal fields in Moravia (bordering Poland), as well as free navigation on the Danube for access to sea ways, must take priority over the ethnic composition of the new republic.[15]

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with a foreword by A. T. Yarwood. First published by M. Secker & Warburg Ltd, London, 1937.

[12] The Treaty of Versailles was signed by thirty-two countries. See NAA A11831 6 1919–1919, 'Treaty of Peace with Germany signed by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers on one Part and Germany on the other Part', Item 5169177.

[13] Robert Thompson, 'First Steps in Diplomacy', in Carl Bridge and B. Attard, eds, *Between Empire and Nation – Australia's External Relations from Federation to Second World War* (Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000), 15–18

[14] W. J. Hudson, 'Billy Hughes in Paris', in *The Birth of Australian Diplomacy* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 122–123.

[15] NAA M3612, 20, 'Personal Papers of Prime Minister Sir Joseph Cook', Item 3159209. Newspaper articles re the abdication of Edward VIII, comments by Sir Joseph Cook on Czechoslovakian borders, the outbreak of the Second World War and the

Importantly, his opinion prevailed and the boundaries of Czechoslovakia were agreed on.[16] Two decades later, during the Czechoslovak crisis, both Hughes and Cook defended Czechoslovakia's position.[17]

The Department of External Affairs was created on 1 January 1901 although Australia did not pursue an independent foreign policy at that time. Nevertheless, foreign countries did establish diplomatic representation in Australia, including Czechoslovakia. The first Consul-General of Czechoslovakia was Dr Jiří Daneš (1921), followed by Emanuel Hajný (1922), Rudolf Světlík (1924), Otto Coufal (1928) and Rudolf Kuráž (1928). In 1934, Dr Adolf Solanský was appointed Vice-Consul. František Květoň, the Czechoslovak Consul-General arrived in 1935.[18]

Apart from Czechoslovak Consuls and Vice-Consuls in Sydney, Honorary Consuls were appointed in Brisbane (J. Urban in 1921),[19] in Melbourne (E. Peacock in 1924),[20] in Adelaide (J. Vaughan in 1929)[21] and in Perth (N. L. Burnell in 1926)[22] to look after Czechoslovak affairs in the States of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and West Australia. On the other hand, Australia had no representation in Czechoslovakia, where British consular officials administered Australian affairs.

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announcement of Sir Joseph's death, plus copy of 'Anthony Hordern's Christmas 1940 Food News'. See also Sir Joseph Cook, 'Czechoslovakia – How borders were decided', *SMH* (24 May 1938).

[16] Grant Duff, *Europe and the Czechs*, 92–97; Paul Twomey, 'Versailles and the 1920s', in Bridge and Attard, eds, *Between Empire and Nation – Australia's External Relations from Federation to Second World War*, 47–60; and Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 22.

[17] On Billy Hughes' comments see Alan Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 5.

[18] Jindřich Dejmek, *Diplomacie Československa II: Biografický slovník československých diplomatů* (*Czechoslovak Diplomacy II: Biographical dictionary of Czechoslovak diplomats*) (Prague: Academia, 2013).

[19] NAA A981, CONS 92, 'Consuls – Czechoslovakia at Brisbane', Item 174258.

[20] NAA A981, CONS 93, 'Consuls – Czechoslovakia at Melbourne', Item 174259; NAA A981, 'Consular Representatives in Australia – EH Peacock, Honorary Consul at Melbourne', Item 595793.

[21] NAA A981, CONS 91, 'Consuls – Czechoslovakia at Adelaide', Item 174257.

[22] NAA A981, CONS 94, 'Consuls – Czechoslovakia at Perth', Item 174260.

On 23 July 1928 Consul Kuráž, informed the Australian government that Beneš had been appointed President of the Security Council of the League of Nations and that he could report that relations with Germany had improved. Moreover, the Australian government was sent a copy of an article entitled 'Ten Years in New Czechoslovakia' which presented an overall positive assessment of the new state. Although the author of this report voices concern over land reform and the impact thereof on the German and Hungarian minorities, he points out that 'there was no acute Jewish question'. The democratic foundation of the state, the economic outlook and foreign policies of Masaryk and Beneš were therefore viewed favourably.[23]

It is also significant that the British government had previously entered into a trade agreement with Czechoslovakia, extending the offer to all Dominions to follow suite.[24] While Australia was not interested at that point in time, in 1928 the Czechoslovak Consul-General did make enquiries regarding Commonwealth Tariff and Commercial Treaties.[25] The first signs of interest were noted in November 1930 after Dr Vilém Černý, counsellor to the Czechoslovak Embassy in London, arranged a meeting with Parker J. Moloney to discuss the possibility of concluding a mutual commercial treaty.[26] In spite of problems relating to transportation of goods and designation of location,[27] negotiations began in Prague in August 1935 between Sir Henry Gullett, the Australian Minister for Trade and Treaties, and Foreign Minister Beneš. On 3 August 1936, a commercial treaty between Australia and Czechoslovakia was signed in Canberra and on 19 August 1936 in Prague. The ratification documents were formally exchanged at the Department of External Affairs in Canberra on 11 November 1937.[28]

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[23] H. Charles Woods, 'Ten Years of New Czechoslovakia', *The English Review* (October 1928), 694–702.

[24] NAA A1667, 69/3/2B, 'Czechoslovakia. Commercial Relations with Australia (Prior to 1931)', Item 139122.

[25] NAA A981, CONS 319, 'Enquiries by Consul General of Czechoslovakia Re Commonwealth Tariff and Commercial Treaties', Item 104376.

[26] C. J. Lloyd, 'Moloney, Parker John (1879–1961)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), 542–543.

[27] NAA A1667, 69/3/2B, 'Czechoslovakia. Commercial Relations with Australia (Prior to 1931)', Item 139122.

The treaty provided for most-favoured-nation status on the basis of reciprocity, granting Australia intermediate tariff rates on forty-four items as well as a number of other tariff concessions and reductions in primage duty.[29] Czechoslovakia undertook to grant duty-free import to Australian products, namely wool, sheepskins, rabbit skins and pearl shell, to consolidate existing low duties on the export of lead and opals and to grant reduction of duty on the import of apples. Australia was interested in the purchase of machinery, laboratory glass and costume jewellery, in addition to leather goods, metal and timber products. On the whole, the agreement favoured Australian interests.[30] Importantly, the Czechoslovak party forbade the export of military hardware to Australia.[31]

In June 1935, the Premier of Tasmania, the Hon. A. G. Ogilvie, accompanied the Hon. J. F. Gaha, Minister of Health, on a visit to Czechoslovakia as part of a world tour aimed at exploring educational and medical facilities. Two Trade and Customs delegations were then sent by the Commonwealth government to Czechoslovakia and other European countries to report on customs patterns.[32] In addition to trade links established between the two countries, Czechoslovak citizens, arriving as bona fide visitors, were no longer required to obtain visas to travel to Australia and the mandated territory of New Guinea for a length of stay not exceeding six months.[33] However, prospective migrants were required to obtain a landing permit.

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[28] NAA A432, 1936/124, 'Trade Agreement (Czechoslovakia) Bill 1936', Item 1121547 and NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra, 1075/2, Stará Registratura MVI-SR 1936–1953, Karton 4441.

[29] Primage duty is imbursement for loading and unloading a ship or for care of goods.

[30] NAA A6006, 1935/10/03, 'Proposed Primage Concessions to Czechoslovakia', Item 447449; 'Trade Treaty, Negotiations open at Prague', *Canberra Post* (24 August 1935).

[31] NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra, 1075/2, Stará Registratura MVI-SR 1936–1953, Karton 4441.

[32] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Report from Sir Joseph Addison to A. Eden, Prague, March 1936, compiled by Robert Hadow, First Secretary of the British Legation in Prague.

Immigration Prior to 1938

For Australia immigration was a lifeline without which the country's development could not proceed, but equally important in the 1930s was the preservation of the country's British heritage. The low cost of assisted fares and the vision of land grants resulted in waves of impoverished British migrants arriving in Australia, while at the same time, the lure of a bright future in Australia appealed to other nationals as well. This reality prompted the federal government to advance policies aimed at controlling the influx of 'less desirable migrants' in an effort to maintain the British character of the country. For this reason, measures to contain the numbers of foreign European migrants, classified as 'aliens', were adopted, aimed in the first instance at curbing immigration from Italy.[34] These were subsequently extended to all foreign migrants.[35]

The revised immigration policy of the Australian government was included in the Annual Report on Czechoslovakia for 1928, submitted by the British envoy in Prague Sir Ronald Macleay to Sir Austen Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 28 March 1929. It addressed the problem of immigration to Australia, stating that the Commonwealth government had limited the number of migrants from Czechoslovakia for 1928 to 300.[36]

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[33] NAA A1608, B41/1/3, 'Czechoslovakia Part 3', Item 206159. Correspondence between W. R. Hodgson, A. Peters and Consul Kuráž.

[34] NAA A367, C3075AB, 'Alien Immigration Italians – Admission to Australia', Item 429637. Letter from Director of Investigation Branch to Secretary of Home and Territories Department, Canberra, 14 December 1927.

[35] Suzanne D. Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora* (Sydney: Collins Australia, 1988), 169. See also NAA A5954 2400/1, 'Speeches (includes speeches by W. M. Hughes, S. M. Bruce, J. A. Lyons, R. G. Menzies and a pamphlet by L. F. Giblin)', Item 302696. Policy Speech of Prime Minister S. M. Bruce in Melbourne on 8 October 1928; and Immigration Rule for General Election 1928. 'Facts about the Bruce-Page Government', *A Handbook for the Guidance of National Party Candidates and other speakers*, 55–59.

The quota system was introduced by the government of Prime Minister Stanley Bruce in 1928 for immigrants from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Czechoslovakia.[37] The number of visas to be issued to prospective Czechoslovak migrants was further revised in 1929, when the Australian government made it known that the immigration quota for Czechoslovak nationals had been exceeded by twenty-seven in 1928; therefore, the number of landing permits to be made available for the following year was reduced to 273.[38]

Following the impact on Australia of the Great Depression, the quota for migrant intake was further downsized. In 1930, the limit set for prospective immigrants from Czechoslovakia was 150 per annum, while it remained at 300 for those arriving from Yugoslavia.[39] On 9 April 1936 the Department of the Interior in Canberra released a circular, stating that the government had decided to modify restrictions on immigration 'in view of the improved conditions prevailing in Australia'.[40] In addition, the sum required for issuing a landing permit was reduced from £500 to £50 and restrictions on the admission of family members had been lifted.

The news about the relaxation of immigration rules was published in the Czech periodical *Krajan* (*Compatriot*), outlining facts about Australia.[41]

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[36] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704.

[37] On guidelines relating to Australian immigration policy see also Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 169.

[38] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. 1929 Annual Report, no. 29, from Sir. R. Macleay to A. Henderson, UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Prague, February 1930.

[39] NAA A367, C30756, 'Alien Immigration – 1 Passports and Laws Governing Admission, 2 Statistics, 3 Landing Permits 1928–1937', Item 429651. Letter from F. J. Quinlan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Home Affairs, 25 February 1930.

[40] NAA A367, C3075AK, 'Alien Immigration 1927–1937', Item 429645.

[41] Josef Ladislav Erben, 'Austrálie pootvírá dveře' (Australia slightly opens its door), *Krajan* (1 November 1936).

The article introduces the Czech reader to immigration rules and provides essential information on living conditions on the distant continent. Apart from including statistics on British immigration, which by 1933 went into reverse, the author draws readers' attention to prospects in Australia for qualified migrants. The improvement of living standards, following the country's economic recovery had led to the relaxation of immigration policies due to internal and external pressures. Nevertheless, the author does not refrain from pointing out that only 400 Czechoslovaks had previously settled in Australia and that strict rules on eligibility of those interested in immigrating still applied. On the whole, the article presents Australia as a land of opportunities not found elsewhere at that point in time.[42] However, in spite of the liberalization of immigration policy to non-British European immigrants, not many Czechoslovak citizens were interested in immigrating to the distant continent.

Czechoslovakia 1930–1936

Examining Annual Reports on Czechoslovakia in the first two decades of the twentieth century, sent to Australia by the office of the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, one is aware not only of the situation in the newly independent state, but also of the opinions of British diplomats who were accredited to that country. Importantly, this information was also shared with the Australian government. It is not known whether attention was given to these reports in Australian official circles but whoever would have read them would have realized that the situation in Czechoslovakia, following Hitler's ascent to power, did not bode well for the country's future. The following review of events that took place in Czechoslovakia in the period under focus is therefore important because it is based on the flow of information, forwarded to Australia by the British government. It is later completed by evidence supplied by Australian diplomats and members of the Commonwealth government.

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[42] AMZV, LA 1938–1939, Karton 478, 'Sekce emigrace do Austrálie', Kanc. Va Založka č. 120699 V-5. The newspaper article was based on correspondence between František Květoň, the Consul-General for Czechoslovakia and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior in May 1936.

Reports forwarded by officers of the British Legation in Prague before 1932 were on the whole positive.[43] In fact, K. T. Gurney in his Annual Report on Czechoslovakia for 1932 writes: 'the political relations between Czechoslovakia and the United Kingdom continue to be most friendly'. Moreover, he assesses the relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany as 'perfectly correct and gentlemanly'.[44]

While reports by officers of the British Legation in Prague prior to 1930 were fairly positive, there was a distinct change in attitude during the ambassadorship of Joseph (later Sir Joseph) Addison from 1930 to 1936.[45] Addison had previously served in Berlin and was sympathetic to German claims on Czechoslovakia.[46] In his reports to the British government he provides a blend of fact-finding results together with his own personal interpretation of the situation. He demonstrates a conviction that the home-grown Nazi Party was justified in opposing the Czechoslovak establishment.[47] Importantly, he was in agreement with them on alleged injustices inflicted upon them by the Treaties of Versailles and St Germain, issues that became more pressing during his ambassadorship. Addison believed that the legitimacy of German claims on Czechoslovakia were unassailable. At the same time he was scathing of Beneš,[48] and was convinced that the existence of Czechoslovakia was an impediment to the stability of Central Europe. In 1931, two years before Hitler's ascent to power, Addison predicted that 'if she (Czechoslovakia) does not do something to rectify matters (and the question is what), then, something may be done without her consent and against her interests'.[49] Most importantly from the point of view of Australian policies, Stanley Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner in London, was influenced by Addison's views on Czechoslovakia.

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[43] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 151.

[44] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Report by K. T. Gurney for 1932, Section on Relations with Foreign Countries, British Empire – United Kingdom and Germany.

[45] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 151, 311–383.

[46] Erik Goldstein, 'Neville Chamberlain, The British Official Mind and the Munich Crisis', *Diplomacy and Statecraft, Special Issue: The Munich Crisis 1938, Prelude to WWII* 10/2 (1999), 276–292.

[47] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Letter from Sir Joseph Addison to Sir John Simon, February 1935.

[48] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Letter from Addison to Sir John Simon, Prague, 30 January 1932.

In his Annual Report for 1933 Addison, already under the influence of events that had taken place in Germany, pays attention to German opponents to Hitler, mostly Jews who were escaping to Czechoslovakia. He comments: 'they are welcomed here, they print their own newspapers, their movements are not restricted nor interfered with and the German Legation's request for information on the whereabouts of the refugees was declined'.[50] In addition, Addison makes no efforts to conceal his antisemitism when he expresses his opinion that 'the Jewish population justifies the worst excesses of Hitler'.[51]

Successive Annual Reports dispatched to the Foreign Office by Addison provide a blend of fact-finding results together with the envoy's personal interpretation of the situation. He pays special attention to the rise of Henlein, whom he considers modest in his demands. He is also apparently convinced that the home-grown Nazi Party is justified in opposing the Czechoslovak establishment.[52] Addison's acrimony towards the Czechs is evident throughout his tour of duty and is supported by Robert Hadow, the First Secretary of the Prague Legation who became one of the most arduous supporters of the policy of appeasement.[53] Both diplomats' efforts to disenfranchise Czechoslovakia are also echoed by Lord Rothermere in his persistent attacks on Czechoslovakia in the British press.[54]

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[49] Ibid.

[50] The refugees of interest to the German Legation were prominent members of the banned Social Democratic Party – Philipp Scheidemann, Otto Wels and Paul Hertz. NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Letter from Joseph Addison to Sir John Simon, February 1934.

[51] Goldstein, 'Neville Chamberlain, The British Official Mind and the Munich Crisis', 276–292.

[52] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704. Letter from Sir Joseph Addison to Sir John Simon, February 1935.

In the 1934 Annual Report, Addison refers to the danger to Czechoslovakia as a 'cloud the size of a man's hand'.[55] In contrast, according to Hadow's Annual Report for 1935 'it covered most of the political sky of this country' suggesting a poor future for Czechoslovak democracy.[56] Moreover, the possibility that Germany's cohesion with the Sudetenland would eventually result in destabilizing Czechoslovakia was predicted by the political scientist E. H. Carr in February 1934. There 'were inbuilt prejudices that poisoned the Anglo-Czech relationship'.[57] These views, together with reports dispatched to the Foreign Office by Sir Nevile Henderson, the British envoy in Berlin, were all contributing factors in substantiating the British Cabinet's perception of Czechoslovakia, leading to its failure to recognize not only the country's political stance as a hindrance to Hitler's plans for European hegemony,[58] but also its importance as an outpost of Western democracy in a region surrounded by totalitarian regimes.

In 1936, Robert W. Seton-Watson, a political activist and historian, published an article entitled 'Czechoslovakia in the European Setting'.[59] Seton-Watson concentrates on political developments in Europe following

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[53] Vít Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich: British Policy towards Czechoslovakia from the Endorsement to the Renunciation of the Munich Agreement (1938–1942)* (Prague: Karolinum, 2008), 45. On Hadow's derogative remarks on the viability of Czechoslovak democracy, see Ritchie, *Portrait of an Appeaser*. See also NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Letter from Robert Hadow to Anthony Eden; NAA A981, CZE 12, 'Czechoslovakia Internal Political Situation 1928–1937', Item 174710; Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans*, 232–234; and Společná Česko-Slovenská Digitální Knihovana NS RČS 1935, PS. 29 (27.2.1936), meeting on 27 February 1936.

[54] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 324.

[55] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports, Part I', Item 174704.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich*, 44.

[58] Neville, 'Nevile Henderson and Basil Newton', 258–275.

[59] Robert Seton-Watson, 'Czechoslovakia in the European Setting', *Slavonic Review and East European Review* 15/43 (1936), 105–120.

Hitler's ascent to power, the positive role played by Czechoslovakia in the unsettled landscape of Central Europe and the threat it faced from Germany. In quoting Bismarck's words, 'Bohemia is a fortress, erected by God … a half-way house between East and West', Seton-Watson highlights concern over the future of Europe. Taking into consideration the ethno-geopolitical situation of Czechoslovakia, exacerbated by the demands of Henlein's Nazi Party, he censures the British for blaming Czechoslovakia for refusing to submit to German demands, in spite of the fact that 'the gunman in Europe seizes the swag and therefore allows the situation to go by default'.[60]

Seton-Watson's essay goes to the heart of the problem, although his arguments failed to convince British policy makers to review their position. Given the low opinion in which both Hadow and Addison held the Czechs,[61] it is perhaps not surprising that conclusions drawn from their tours of duty in Prague did not advance hopes for change in the British mind in Czechoslovakia's favour.[62] In addition, the British appear to have been unable to see through Henlein's deception.[63] Significantly, the Czechoslovak Consul-General in Sydney did forward Seton-Watson's essay to the Australian government.[64]

Addison completed his tour of duty and retired from the diplomatic service in 1936. As the political situation in Central Europe worsened, Basil Newton became Britain's new envoy in 1937. It was during his tenure that intense diplomatic negotiations with Germany, involving not only Britain but also France, Italy, Poland and Hungary, were initiated. Newton was an experienced diplomat who spent some time as secretary at the British

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[60] Ibid. 114.

[61] Neville, 'Nevile Henderson and Basil Newton', 258–275. See also the reaction to Seton-Watson's Report in the House of Commons, 10 October 1938. NAA A981, CZE 20, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany, Foreign Office Prints', Item 174721.

[62] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 78–88.

[63] Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich*, 48.

[64] NAA A981, CZE 12, 'Czechoslovakia Internal Political Situation 1928–1937', Item 174710. Confidential memorandum from the UK to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, 8 May 1936.

Legation in Berlin where he became not only acquainted with the German scene but also sympathetic to the Sudeten German cause.[65] Not surprisingly Newton was sceptical about Czechoslovakia's chances of survival.[66] In his report for 1937 Newton agrees with Addison's earlier statements that minority issues should have precluded the Czechs from establishing a multinational state.

The Czechs' efforts to win British public opinion over to their side of the dispute were further undermined by the British historian Arnold Toynbee who condemned Czechoslovakia in an article published by *The Economist* on 10 July 1937.[67] The article was subsequently reprinted in the Australian daily *The Argus*, on 23 May 1938. Toynbee describes the Czechs in the following way:

> Living as underdogs; they have acquired the under-dog's characteristic virtues and vices […] Czech-meat would be as indigestible a fare for Berlin as it once proved for Vienna; and it is not even likely that Germany, if she did attack Czechoslovakia would have the chance of killing and devouring her prey at leisure.[68]

Newton's annual report on Czechoslovakia for 1937 aligns itself with the strategy of Nevile Henderson, who favoured forceful submission of the Czechs to German demands at the time when Britain was developing a solution to a precarious situation that was in Germany's favour. Most importantly, there was widespread belief amongst British diplomats and politicians that if the Sudetenland was annexed to Germany this solution would in the end be recognized by the Czechs themselves as being in their interests because the country would then be saved from an insoluble problem.[69] In order to ease the built up pressure between Germany and Czechoslovakia, Neville Chamberlain suggested to the Czechs to avail themselves of the services of a mediator. The person chosen for this task was Lord Runciman of Doxford.[70] Interestingly, the office of the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs saw the need to officially inform the Australian government of Lord Runciman's mission to Czechoslovakia on 25 July 1938,[71] although it had actually already been made aware of this decision in the preceding week.[72] Disappointingly, Runciman's mission ended in failure. Throughout his assignment he was manipulated by the Sudeten Germans and the German propaganda machine.[73] The Czechs produced evidence of misrepresentation and plans of German aggression, but these were dismissed as insubstantial. On 2 September 1938 Runciman reported to London that he had entrusted Henlein with a message to Hitler:

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[65] Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 315–316 and Neville, 'Nevile Henderson and Basil Newton', 258–275.

[66] On Newton's hostility and doubts about Czechoslovakia's survival, see the letter from Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, 8 June 1938. NAA A981, CZE 20, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany, Foreign Office Prints', Item 174721.

[67] *The Economist* was available in Australia as well, usually one month after being published in Britain.

[68] Toynbee's article was also mentioned by Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 326.

> […] that the settlement of the Sudeten question may lead to settlement of questions now outstanding between the United Kingdom and Germany […] that Great Britain desires an Anglo-German Agreement to which the settlement of the Sudeten question might well open the way.[74]

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[69] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Letter from Newton to Lord Halifax. See also NAA A981, CZE 20, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany, Foreign Office Prints', Item 174721. Letter from John Troutbeck to Anthony Eden, 4 February 1938.

[70] Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm: The Second World War*, vol. I (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 260–262. See also Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje*, 383–417 and Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 228–243.

[71] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Cablegram from the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, 25 July 1938.

[72] Ibid. Telegram from A. Stirling to Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, 18 July 1938.

[73] Kurt Weisskopf, *The Agony of Czechoslovakia, 1938–1968* (London: Elek, 1968), 81.

[74] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Most secret cablegram from the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs to Prime Minister Joseph Lyons, 2 September 1938, Circular B 207.

In a major editorial published on 7 September 1938 in *The Times*, Geoffrey Dawson, argues that Czechoslovakia should concede the Sudetenland to Hitler. He writes:

> [...] it might be worthwhile for the Czechoslovak government to consider [...] making Czechoslovakia a more homogenous state by the secession of that fringe of alien populations who are contiguous to the nation with which they are united by race.[75]

The article, dispatched to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra from the Australian High Commission in London on 9 September 1938, includes Runciman's comment:

> The responsibility for the final break must in my opinion rest on Herr Henlein and Herr Frank and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging them to extreme and unconstitutional actions. I have more sympathy, however, with the Sudeten case.[76]

Just as Addison had previously influenced Bruce, Runciman's reports from Czechoslovakia also impacted on the views of Australia's High Commissioner.

Government Responses

The Australian High Commission in London was Australia's only overseas diplomatic mission and its role was to inform the Australian government of overseas developments. Liaising with the British government, the High Commission was called upon to participate in consultations on Dominions affairs, on decisions affecting foreign affairs, the Australian Imperial Forces and the granting of landing permits to prospective migrants.[77] Bruce's staff consisted of Frank Keith Officer, John D. L. Hood and Major Osmond Charles William Fuhrman. Alfred Stirling was in charge of the team. Bruce and his officers were responsible for discharging directives, for the maintenance of contacts not only with the British government, but also with representatives of other members of the British Commonwealth, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and journalists, whose activities were of interest to Australian representatives in London. They exercised their duties in accordance with memoranda issued by the Australian government, at all times in line with those of British authorities.[78]

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[75] Geoffrey Dawson, Editorial *The Times* (7 September 1938). See also Bruegel, *Czechoslovakia Before Munich*, 251–252.

[76] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – The Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement September 1938, Part II', Item 174719. Runciman's letter to Chamberlain, 27 September 1938.

Apart from Annual Reports, regularly forwarded to Australia, communiqués on responses of the British government and individual British Members of Parliament were made available to the Commonwealth government as well. While in 1936 and 1937 letters to the Secretary of External Affairs in Canberra were sent by air mail, in the latter stage of the Czechoslovak crisis the communications were mostly coded and cabled, with copies sent to the prime minister, the Attorney General, the leader of the National Party, the Secretary of Defence and other Cabinet ministers. While these communications generally followed the official British viewpoint, the reports forwarded by Australian officials differed from those sent by British sources, in that they served to maintain communication lines between Australia and Britain with regard to the situation in Czechoslovakia. When officials from the Australian High Commission reported on the increasingly precarious situation in Central Europe to Canberra, they would in turn receive reports on the Australian government's reaction and at times a personal message from Prime Minister Joseph Lyons to his counterpart in Britain, or to High Commissioner Bruce.

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[77] See Carl Bridge, Frank Bongiorno and David Lee, eds, *The High Commissioners: Australia's Representatives in the United Kingdom, 1910–2010* (Canberra: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010).

[78] See cablegram from J. A. Lyons, prime minister, to N. Chamberlain, UK prime minister, repeated to High Commissioner in London, 17 March 1938, in R. G. Neale, ed., *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976), 278.

Australia became interested in the situation in Czechoslovakia as early as the beginning of 1936. From a confidential letter sent to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs by Keith Officer, it is obvious that Henlein's fabrications about alleged famine in the Sudeten districts and the Czechoslovak government's lack of benefits to alleviate the situation of the unemployed, did exercise some influence on Australian diplomats.[79] A letter sent from London on 31 July 1936 reports on economic and political negotiations taking place in Berlin between Czechoslovakia and Germany, supposedly in preparation for the signing of a non-aggression pact.[80] In addition, a letter sent from the Australian High Commission to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs draws attention to the fact that the proposed non-aggression pact should also contain a clause for non-interference in Czechoslovak internal affairs and the prohibition of German press and radio propaganda,[81] to which the French government allegedly gave its support.[82]

On 6 October 1936, Officer sent a report on the situation in Central Europe, dealing in particular with the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia. He points out that representatives of the German minority were divided into two groups: activists (opponents to Nazism) on the one hand and adherents to National Socialism (Henlein's SdP) on the other. Furthermore, he raises the issue of the dispute between Kamil Krofta, the Czech Minister for Foreign Affairs and Anthony Eden, in which the latter expressed the conviction that the Bohemian Germans' grievances were justified and that Britain was not interested in interfering in the controversy.[83]

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[79] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Confidential letter from Keith Officer, 14 February 1936.

[80] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722.

[81] Ibid. Memorandum to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra from Keith Officer, 25 August 1936.

[82] Ibid. There seems to be considerable confusion over this issue, as is evident from another letter of 16 February 1937, in which Officer drew attention to the fact that the conclusion of the treaty was conditional upon improvement of Sudeten German living conditions.

From the beginning of 1937, Officer continues to report on attacks carried out in the German press against Czechoslovakia and notes that the French government was urged by the Foreign Office to put pressure on Czechoslovakia's government 'to redress the grievances of the German minority'.[84] Interestingly, at this time he also sends a detailed report on a statement made by Beneš, in which the Czechoslovak president presents an account of the Sudeten German problem and defends the government's position.[85] In correspondence a few days later, Officer correctly evaluates the situation when he writes that should Germany be forced to go to war with Czechoslovakia at the risk of starting a European conflict, Germany's policy would be directed towards the disintegration and domination of Czechoslovakia as the first step towards German penetration into the Danube Basin.[86] His letter of 26 February 1937 coincides with the development of a draft of the memorandum, dated 9 February, which was to be presented by the Australian delegation at the Imperial Conference in London in May and June of that year. Given the length of time involved in communicating information, Officer could not have been informed about the contents of the memorandum before he sent his letter.

These were early reports. From Officer's correspondence it is clear that he agrees with the previously expressed view that the Czechs are to blame for the worsening situation and that he was also able to foresee the direction the Germans would take in the pursuit of their goals. Nevertheless, when reviewing information gathered by Australian officials in London and sent to Canberra, it is important to weigh the merit of the reports: is the report the writer's' own evaluation of the situation or is it based on the outcome of British investigations and policy decisions, in which case the Australian officials merely transmitted the intelligence? Judging from information contained in the reports, it seems to be that in the majority of cases the writers follow the official line of the British government, which was then passed on to the Department of External Affairs.

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[83] Ibid. 6 October 1936.
[84] Ibid. 16 February 1937.
[85] Ibid. 23 February 1937.
[86] Ibid. 27 February 1937.

As of May 1937, reports concerning Czechoslovakia were mostly written by Alfred Stirling. As Bruce's assistant, Stirling's reports were prepared either for Bruce, or produced according to his superior's directives. Stirling was an experienced diplomat, whose reports to the Department of External Affairs on developments in Central Europe during 1938 were of crucial importance.[87] In cablegrams Stirling writes in great detail about every aspect of British policies, of German moves to radicalize the situation and the Czechoslovak defence. Stirling was also very active in accumulating articles from the British press. He even encloses press reports that support of the Czechoslovak side of the dispute, including statements made by Beneš, as well as readers' letters to the editor. In addition, Stirling attaches bulletins issued by the Czech News Agency to his reports. Stirling's dispatches to Canberra thus provided the Australian government with a comprehensive assessment of the situation. As a result, the Australian delegation to the 1937 Imperial Conference was adequately prepared to take part in foreign policy deliberations.[88]

Imperial Conference

The year 1937 marked another venture into international politics for Australia. The draft of the memorandum[89] to be presented by the Australian delegation at the Imperial Conference states:

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[87] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part II', Item 174719 and NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 3, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part III', Item 174720.

[88] Alfred Stirling was a barrister who joined the Australian High Commission in 1935. His book *Lord Bruce: The London Years* is a valuable record of diplomatic relations and activities pursued by Bruce.

[89] Dated 9 February 1937.

> Peace of Europe today is centered around Germany's future intentions [...] the revision of frontiers and German minorities, particularly in Czechoslovakia, which are likely to come to the front at any time and which may not only increase the prevailing tension, but cause a general conflagration.[90]

A further memorandum, dated 10 March 1937, draws attention to the fact that: 'The public in Czechoslovakia is hypnotized by the growing bogey of German domination in Central Europe and that France is concerned about the situation'.[91]

Chamberlain, Eden and other British politicians met with the principal delegates during the conference. The Australian delegates, Joseph Lyons, Stanley Bruce, Richard Casey and Sir Archdale Parkhill,[92] were keenly involved in the debates, demonstrating their concern over the worsening political situation worldwide and the need to respond to it. Australia's interest in international affairs was made clear in Lyons' statement at the first plenary session on 14 May when he declares: 'The peoples of the Dominions – and this is very noticeable in Australia – are taking a widespread interest in all questions of foreign policy because of the growing realization that no nation can live unto itself'.[93] On 21 May 1937, Richard Casey[94] supported German demands to gather Germans spread across Central Europe into the German Reich, imploring Britain not to be enticed to stand behind Czechoslovakia in its struggle to maintain its independence.[95]

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[90] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 29–30.

[91] Ibid. 48–49. The phrase 'German bogey' was penned by envoy Guerney in 1932. See NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports', Item 174704.

[92] Richard Gardiner Casey (Baron Casey) was a politician, political liaison officer in London, later first Australian Ambassador in the United States during the Second World War and Australian Governor General from 1965 to 1969. Sir Archdale Parkhill was Australia's Minister for Defence.

[93] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 64, and Robert C. Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, unpublished PhD thesis (Washington, DC: The American University, 1971), 150–157.

[94] Ibid. 132.

[95] Ritchie Ovendale, 'Appeasement', in Bridge and Attard, eds, *Between Empire and Nation, Australia's External Relations from Federation to Second World War*, 152–167.

Bruce contributed to the debate on 3 June 1937, recalling the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. He expresses regret that Germany had to bear the brunt of its implications and adds that the present conflict need not have arisen had conciliation been sought. In Bruce's opinion, a reasonable arrangement with Germany concerning her military advances would have saved the world from a contemporary armaments race. Moreover, due to the fact that the ex-Allies had not modified the rigors of the Treaty of Versailles, 'it had been left to Germany to take action to break through a number of its provisions, stirring a great deal of sympathy abroad'.[96]

From statements made by leaders of participating Commonwealth countries it is obvious that Czechoslovakia would not have been able to generate support for its position. This is particularly true when we consider the failure of British envoys in Berlin and Prague, as well as in Budapest and Warsaw, to assess the potential threat of Hitler's demands and the subversive tactics he applied to achieve his goals. Instead, Britain and the Commonwealth countries were prepared to approach Czechoslovakia with suggestions to revise its 'unproductive' policies and satisfy the alleged grievances of its German population. Britain and its Dominions were thus obviously in favour of reaching out to Hitler with an olive branch in the hope that he would not then disturb the peace.[97]

The Australian government and its Commonwealth partners fully supported Britain on policies adopted with regard to Czechoslovakia. Developments, which took place between 1937 and 1939 were well documented in Australia. During that period, the frequency of information exchanged between London and Canberra was increasing. Minute details of statements on the worsening situation, made by members of the Australian government, provide the basis for Australia's response to the Czechoslovak crisis. In 1938 the policy of appeasement pursued by Britain was accepted at face value in Australia and understood as being instrumental to achieving a lasting settlement in Central Europe.[98]

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[96] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 132.

[97] Michael Fry, 'Agents and Structures, The Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis September 1938', *Diplomacy and Statecraft, Special Issue: The Munich Crisis 1938, Prelude to WWII* 10/2 (1999), 293–341.

Interestingly, Sir Alan Watt is of the opinion that the events leading to the Munich crisis sowed the seeds of Australia's own foreign policy. He bases his argument on the declaration made by the Australian delegation at the Imperial Conference in 1937, 'of the serious nature of the German move against Czechoslovakia when it comes […]'.[99] However, this understanding did not signal a change in Australia's dependency on British foreign policy in 1937. Thus, Toenniessen's argument that 'there were Australians' attitudes toward or opinions about foreign policy but no foreign policy as such' seems accurate.[100]

The realization that war might break out in 1938 was of concern to politicians and diplomats throughout the world. Six weeks after the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich, on 30 April 1938, Stirling dispatched a memorandum to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, informing him about the ultimatum served on the Czechoslovak government by Henlein in which he demanded, amongst other things 'complete freedom in the Sudetenland to profess adherence to the German element and German ideology', and that the Czechoslovak government revise its foreign policy. Importantly, Stirling states: 'the Henlein party has now shown its true colours by its profession of Nazism and by putting forward proposals which must involve the break-up of the State'. Stirling also acknowledges the fears of Czech and Jewish inhabitants of the region who were at that time selling their properties in the Sudetenland at low prices in order to attract buyers in the hope that proceeds from sales would be beneficial to them in their quest to escape the dangerous situation.[101]

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[98] Eric Montgomery Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1991).

[99] Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938–1965*, 21.

[100] Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, 149.

[101] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Letter to the Secretary of the Department for External Affairs from Alfred Stirling, 30 April 1938. See also NAA A981, CZE 7,

Three weeks later, on 22 May, when the Czechoslovak government mobilized its armed forces upon receipt of intelligence reports that Germany was massing troops on its border, Stirling again offers and analysis of the situation. By this time he is certain that Henlein is taking orders from the German government. This is a significant revelation of his earlier position.[102]

Stirling attended Addison's lecture in May 1938 at the 1900 Club in which the former envoy told members that the oppressed Sudeten Germans were the best element in the country, and had never wished to join with the Slav Czechs but instead had wanted to join with Austria. Czechoslovakia, according to Addison 'was patent medicine of the most diverse ingredients which it was dangerous to shake'. Furthermore, Stirling comments on Addison's admiration of Germany's National Socialism, its successes and appeal to the German people, as well as on his criticism that too much attention was being paid to the 'excrescences of the present regime, concentration camps and the like'.[103] Interestingly, Stirling omits the above passage in the recollection of the event in his memoir, published in 1974.[104]

In a report sent to Col. Hodgson one month later, Stirling refers to Nevile Henderson, the British envoy in Berlin, who was of the opinion that 'the German War Office was quietly and unobtrusively getting everything as ready as possible against all eventualities'. According to Stirling, Henderson was in total agreement with the Sudeten German demands.[105]

Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Newton's report on Czechoslovakia's concern about France, its main ally.

[102] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Letter from Stirling to Col. Hodgson, 28 May 1938.

[103] Ibid. Memorandum from Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 21 May 1938.

[104] Alfred Stirling, *Lord Bruce: The London Years* (Melbourne: Hawthorne Press, 1974), 72.

[105] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Letter from Stirling to Hodgson, 11 June 1938.

Stirling's telegram of 5 August 1938, informed the Australian government that eight divisions in Germany and Austria would be called up and that according to the British embassy's military attaché's assessment, force would be employed against Czechoslovakia in the autumn.[106] Moreover, it was obvious that war was inevitable from his report on the reception at Cheb (Eger) in the Sudetenland of Hitler's threats against Czechoslovakia at the Nuremberg rally on 14 September 1938 with 'frenzied joy',[107] as well as on the unrest in western Bohemia, which he notes appears to have been provoked by the Sudeten Germans.

The Key Players

The challenge for Australia in regard to the events leading to the Munich Crisis was met by four key Australian figures: Stanley Bruce, Robert Menzies, Joseph Lyons and William (Billy) Hughes. All served as Australian prime ministers during the twentieth century.

Stanley Melbourne Bruce (1883–1967) played a key role with regard to Australia's attitude towards Czechoslovakia in 1938. Cambridge educated, with significant experience in international affairs, Bruce was able to foresee the future when he told Stirling after Hitler's annexation of Austria in March 1938: 'the next crisis will be Czechoslovakia'.[108] Indeed, Bruce was aware that Czechoslovakia could find itself in a precarious situation, as was obvious from the cable to Lyons of 21 March 1938, in which he issued a warning that Britain would not intervene if Czechoslovakia remained unreasonable, but would do so if a reasonable Czechoslovakia was to become a victim to Germany's aggression.[109]

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[106] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Telegram no. 116, 5 August 1938.

[107] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Stirling's telegram to the Department of External Affairs, 14 September 1938. For reports on the Nuremberg rally and Hitler's threats against Czechoslovakia, see also *SMH* (14 September 1938), *The Age* (15 September 1938), *The Advertiser* (14 September 1938) and *Barrier Miner* (15 September 1938).

[108] Stirling, *Lord Bruce: The London Years*, 67.

This prediction came to pass two months later when Czechoslovakia moved to the centre of international attention. Requesting 'a full story' on Czechoslovakia from Stirling, Bruce was anxious to get to the core of the problem. The result was a summary of the minority problem in Czechoslovakia since 1936, including events that had taken place since the annexation of Austria, which Stirling sent to Canberra on 23 May 1938. The report addresses issues contributing to the developing crisis in Czechoslovakia: the demands of the Sudeten German leadership as well as the response of the Czechoslovak government and its efforts to review its policies with the proviso that it would not accept those that were 'in contradiction to its basic principles of democratic and parliamentary government'.[110] Furthermore, he reports on talks between the British and Czechoslovak governments, on Henlein's ultimatum presented at Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) and his attempts to exert pressure on the Czechoslovak government. Stirling abstains at this point from taking sides on the issue. Given that the summary was sent in Bruce's name, it seems apparent that the High Commissioner was in support of Stirling's approach. However, this was not the case.

Bruce understood the dilemma facing the Czechoslovak government when presented with Henlein's demands of racial segregation of minorities, the illegality of individuals of one national group integrating with another, the added pressure to install National Socialism in the proposed autonomous region of Sudetenland, and the threat of incorporating the region into the German Reich.[111] Yet, at the same time Bruce was of the opinion that the Czechs should accede to Henlein's demands on 'the basis of a historical development (that) would fulfil the intentions of the Peace Treaty (of 1918), in the knowledge that indeed it was going to be a great shock for them (the Czechs)'.[112] In the same letter that accompanied Bruce's summary of the situation, Stirling also refers to a meeting with Addison at the 1900 Club and informs the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs that Bruce has asked him to prepare extracts from Addison's dispatches.[113] Bruce then forwarded a memorandum, dated 24 May 1938, containing summaries of dispatches written by Addison from 1933 to 1936, in which he outlines the situation in Czechoslovakia to Lyons, as perceived by the former envoy to Czechoslovakia. It included an undated, confidential report sent to Canberra, quoting Addison's belief that Czechoslovakia was a 'Polizeistaat' (police state), insinuations that Beneš was a political dictator and comments that Czechoslovakia's legal system was dysfunctional.[114]

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[109] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 287.

[110] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Letter from Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 25 May 1938.

It was this summary of Addison's reports for 1935 and 1936, in which the ambassador shows support for the 'plight' of the Sudeten German minority (excluding the Sudeten German opponents to Nazism[115]), that was crucial in conditioning Bruce's perspective with regard to Czechoslovakia. It is also not surprising therefore that he adds his support to Addison's accusations of Czech discriminatory policies against the German minority. Bruce cites Addison's assessment as follows:

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[111] Ibid. 'Bruce, Summary of Minority Problem in Czechoslovakia since 1936. Confidential', no. 141, 23 May 1938.

[112] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 362–363.

[113] Ibid. Stirling's letter of 25 May 1938.

[114] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Confidential Report no. 144 sent by Bruce and a report from Sir J. Addison to Anthony Eden, 3 September 1936.

[115] NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705. Report from Sir Joseph Addison for 1935 and Report from Sir Joseph Addison for 1936.

> Jealousy, envy and hatred won the day, and for eighteen years the lot of the Sudeten has been that of the helot … there is no justice in this country where a minority is concerned … Dr Beneš is a pure Czech, imbued with all the prejudices of a man who has risen by the power of speech assisted by luck … he is ruthless in his internal policy and suppresses political opponents …[116]

On 25 May 1938, Bruce met with Lord Halifax and Lord Stanley, and during the ensuing discussion declared that 'as Germany could secure its economic and ideological goods either by peaceful means or war, why let war occur'.[117] Bruce's negative opinion of Beneš was reinforced in a telegram to Lyons on 4 September 1938 in which he repeats Runciman's assertion that Czech proposals to the Sudeten German Party did not go far enough, concurring with Lyons that it was necessary to put 'the strongest pressure on Dr Beneš and the Czech government for maximum concessions to bring about a settlement'.[118] Bruce did not deviate from this opinion even after he was made aware that incidents in the Sudeten territory were engineered by Germany to justify armed intervention.[119] The following day he sent an additional cable to Lyons, in which he declares: 'the incidents were sponsored due to high state of tension which is unjustifiable'.[120] Bruce concludes his exposé by blaming the Foreign Office for not heeding Addison's warnings on the situation, resulting in the present 'seriousness of the problem'.[121]

Aware of the complexity of the problem, which called for a measured approach by a skilled politician, Bruce's misgivings about the precarious standoff in Czechoslovakia were recorded by Stirling. However, when it was suggested that Bruce would be most suitable for inclusion in an international commission charged with bringing the situation in Czechoslovakia under control, he is reported to have replied: 'What a perfectly dreadful idea.'[122]

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[116] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Confidential Report no. 144 sent by Bruce and report from Sir J. Addison to Anthony Eden, 25 August 1936; NAA (M104, 6/2, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Bruce) Czecho-Slovakia 1938', Item 242501.

[117] Fry, 'Agents and Structures: The Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis', 293–341.

[118] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Cablegram from Lyons to Chamberlain, no. 84, 2 September 1938. Telegram from Bruce to Lyons, no. 137, 4 September 1938.

[119] Ibid. Bruce's cablegram to Lyons, 14 September 1938.

[120] Ibid. Bruce's cablegram to Lyons, 15 September 1938.

[121] Ibid.

In his capacity as Australia's High Commissioner, Bruce was also involved in consultations with the acting Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs. In September 1938, eleven meetings of Dominions' representatives with the Acting Secretary took place to discuss the implications of the crisis in Czechoslovakia and to suggest recommendations on behalf of the Commonwealth, aimed at preventing the outbreak of war. The meetings, initiated by the British government, demonstrate not only the impact of the crisis on Dominions' representatives but the need for prompt action and cooperation between their respective governments in support of initiatives taken by the Foreign Office in disregard of Czechoslovakia's vital interests. At the first meeting, which took place on 19 September 1938, Bruce urged the Commonwealth to guarantee Czechoslovakia's integrity if its government agreed to Germany's demands. In his opinion a comprehensive adjustment, leading to the ending of the Czechoslovak dilemma, was called for to prevent Germany from pursuing further claims on neighbouring countries. He uses the words 'German aggression', indicating that he is aware of the character of Hitler's intentions. Germany's ambiguity was further alluded to by Bruce on 23 September 1938 when he declares that territorial cession would bring peace, whereas enforced occupation would challenge the principle of negotiations, thus encouraging Hitler to march onward.[123] Interestingly, Bruce was actually comfortable with this approach, for he considered Czechoslovakia to be an 'arbitrarily created nation' the present form of which, according to him, was not worth preserving.[124] At the same time he indicates that he is not oblivious to the fact that public opinion in Britain, in the Dominions and throughout the world had at that time been aroused against the dictatorial methods and threats of force used by the Germans. This demonstrates that Bruce was aware of the unscrupulous character of German politicians.[125]

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[122] Stirling, *Lord Bruce: The London Years*, 73.

[123] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 461.

[124] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Secret cablegram from Bruce to Lyons, 17 September 1938.

Bearing in mind Britain's preference for non-interference in the Czechoslovak quagmire, Bruce saw the need for Czechoslovakia's capitulation as a means for renewing stability on the European continent. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that at a meeting on 26 September he agreed with other Dominion representatives that it was necessary for the United Kingdom to insist on accepting the German proposals, a point that was communicated by Lyons.[126] Moreover, in a cable to Chamberlain, Lyons suggests that Bruce should be dispatched to Rome in an effort to persuade Mussolini to use his influence with Hitler,[127] an initiative already implemented by Chamberlain.

Throughout this period, Bruce kept Lyons informed of the crisis in Central Europe. His ciphered cables (and those of Stirling) report on daily, sometimes hourly developments with regard to the situation in Czechoslovakia. These included reports on British Cabinet decisions, on the Dominions' suggestions, on the assessment of the situation, on Franco-British consultations, on Chamberlain's interaction with Hitler, on Hitler's attitude, and the Sudeten German hostility, which all lead Bruce to the conclusion that the Czechs and Germans cannot live together.[128] More than anything, it is Bruce's insistence that Czechoslovakia, a country he describes as 'a festering sore', must be forced to submit to German demands, because the Czechs do not appear willing to make further efforts to fulfil the demands of the Sudeten Germans.[129]

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[125] NAA M104, 6/2, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Bruce) Czecho-Slovakia 1938', Item 242501. Draft of most secret cable from Bruce to Lyons, 23 September 1938.

[126] See Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 279 and *SMH* (28 September 1938). On 26 September Bruce made a second call at the Dominions Office at 3.30 pm to convey the reply of the Commonwealth Government to the situation.

[127] Lyons, *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 29 September 1938, 332.

[128] NAA M104, 6/2, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Bruce) Czecho-Slovakia 1938', Item 242501. Draft of most secret cable from Bruce to Lyons, 23 September 1938.

On 27 September Bruce sent a long report to Lyons where he elaborates on proposals that he has previously submitted with regard to the impasse in Central Europe. Aware of the views of his fellow high commissioners, Bruce approached Malcolm McDonald, the Acting Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, with a request that the Dominions' representatives be allowed to make their suggestions known to Chamberlain. He was immediately invited to join the Inner Cabinet meeting to present an assessment of the situation.

Apart from expressing concern that a conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia could lead to French military involvement, Bruce implored the British government to put pressure on the French to abstain from coming to Czechoslovakia's aid in fulfilment of their treaty of assistance with that country. In the Dominions' opinion this act would draw Britain into conflict with Germany. To avoid this situation, the Dominions were in agreement that the Sudetenland must be transferred to Germany. While Bruce makes it clear that this view had strong support in Australia, he also indicates to Lyons: 'The German Memorandum would be the challenge to all the principles and the ideals for which the democracies stand against the principle of force and the imposition of the wills of the Dictators upon the world'.[130] Importantly, Bruce was convinced that Czechoslovakia would be defeated in no time. Therefore, in order to avoid being drawn into the conflict, it was imperative not to publicly denounce the German memorandum, but rather to suggest 'some modification' to it, which would not prevent Hitler from occupying the Sudetenland on 1 October. In his conclusion,

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[129] David Lee, 'Appeasement and the Bruce Report 1937–1939', in Christopher Baxter and Andrew Stewart, eds, *Diplomats at War, British and Commonwealth Diplomats in Wartime* (Leyden: Martinus Nijhof Publishers, 2008), 149–171. See also NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Telegram from Bruce to the prime minister, 4 September 1938.

[130] NAA M104, 6/2, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Bruce) Czecho-Slovakia 1938', Item 242501. Note on discussion of position with Malcolm McDonald, 27 September 1938.

Bruce reassures Lyons that these are his personal views and that he is speaking neither on behalf of the Australian government nor the Dominions.[131]

From his statement it is evident that Bruce was well aware that Hitler was acting in violation of international law. At the same time, however, he was prepared to forgo principles of democratic ideals by establishing a platform, on the basis of which it would have been possible to align Hitler's ambitions with the interests of the Commonwealth. Whether he was prepared to admit it or not, Bruce's views were in line with those of other Dominions representatives,[132] as well as with members of the Australian Cabinet.[133]

On the day the Munich conference took place, Ambassador Newton was already in receipt of objections conveyed to him by the Czechoslovak government. Reacting to the news, Bruce expresses the view that 'the time had come to be firm with Beneš, that reluctance to bear on the Czechs would now be a mistake and that the Czechs should be made aware that their obstructive attitude was unwelcome to the UK and Dominion governments'.[134] Keeping in mind Addison's criticism of the Czechoslovak government, Bruce appears amenable to disregarding the nature of Hitler's methods, intended 'to right the wrongs', to which the Germans in Czechoslovakia were alleged to have fallen victim. As Michael Fry writes 'one might see it as the triumph of ideés fixes over evidence, of the deductive over the inductive. 1938 was a time for action out of conviction, not questioning beliefs'.[135] Bruce embodied the quintessence of Australian statecraft at the centre of world events in 1938. He showed ingenuity in the art of diplomacy but chose to disregard the root of the problem for the sake of appeasing Hitler. His was a one-sided approach that fell short of bringing the real cause of the political gridlock in Czechoslovakia to light.

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Fry, 'Agents and Structures: The Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis, September 1938', 293–341.

[133] Ovendale, 'Appeasement', 152–167.

[134] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 474.

[135] Fry, 'Agents and Structures: The Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis', 293–341.

Robert Gordon Menzies (1894–1978) served as Attorney General in the government of Joseph Lyons. He was an astute politician who was unswerving in his loyalty to Britain. Committed to upholding so-called British values, on which Australia's establishment was anchored, he noted on his first visit in 1935 that Britain 'can so strangely […] move the souls of those who go home to a land they have never seen'.[136] This was a sentiment shared by a number of Australians. To Menzies, Britain was a country without equal in the world and he felt honoured to be part of her heritage.[137]

During his third overseas trip in 1938,[138] as head of an Australian trade delegation, Menzies was invited to attend a meeting of British and Dominions Representatives in the House of Lords on 25 May 1938. Here he was perturbed by Czechoslovakia's stance.[139] He was convinced that Britain's foreign policy, whose principles of justice, he declared, 'was consistent with the government of our race, was the only one that should be followed'.[140]

During his European tour Menzies visited Germany to assess its industrial potential and achievements. Disgruntled by the tactics of leading British trade representatives,[141] Menzies became interested in exploring how German expertise could benefit the development of Australia's manufacturing sector. He was impressed by Germany's progress, competence and the ideals instilled in its people.[142] Inevitably, he became drawn into the

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[136] A. W. Martin, 'Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (Bob) (1894–1978)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 15 (Canberra: Australian National University, 2000), 354–360.

[137] Allan Martin and Michelle Grattan, eds, *Australian Prime Ministers* (Sydney: New Holland Publishers, 2001), 174–206.

[138] Stirling, *Lord Bruce: The London Years*, 72.

[139] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 358–362.

[140] NAA CP450/7/313, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Menzies) Royal Institute of International Affairs, Dinner on 21st June 1938 (London) and BBC Talk 20 June 1938', Item 259819. See also *The Argus* (17 September 1938).

[141] NAA AA1972/341, 83, 'Personal Papers of Prime Minister J. A. Lyons', Item 214760. Letters to J. A. Lyons from Sir Earl Page of 16 July 1938 and 25 July 1938. NAA CP450/7/335. '(Personal Papers for Prime Minister Menzies) External Affairs Department representations 1938–1938', Item 259441.

[142] Carl Bridge, 'Appeasement and After: Towards a Re-assessment of the Lyons and Menzies Governments' Defence and Foreign Policies 1931–1941', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51/3 (2005), 372.

Czechoslovak impasse and made no attempt to disguise his sympathy for the German position in a communication to Lyons on 6 August 1938. The letter demonstrates that Menzies, who consulted with Henderson, was not prepared to argue that Henderson's perception of the situation in Central Europe was misguided. On the contrary, he was impressed by his clarity of thinking. In a letter to Lyons, Menzies expresses his criticism of the Czechs, stating: 'I am more than ever impressed with the view that this problem requires a very firm hand at Prague, otherwise Beneš will continue to bluff at the expense of much more important nations, including our own'.[143]

Nevertheless, in an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) on 12 September 1938, Menzies' account of his impressions of Germany and the political situation in Europe appear to be circumspect. He repeats the accepted belief that the Versailles Treaty is at the heart of the Czechoslovak problem and, while not wholeheartedly approving of Germany's approach to the situation and the methods used to achieve its goals, he demonstrates understanding for its frustration. Moreover, he also acknowledges: 'that the Czechoslovak government was entitled to resist any demand which goes beyond justice and involved an attack upon the national integrity of the republic'.[144] Yet, his approach to the solution of the situation is irrational. While he suggests that Czechoslovakia should be divided into cantons like Switzerland,[145] he omits to draw attention to the fact that Henlein appeared committed to installing a Nazi regime in his region. Menzies, a firm supporter of appeasement,[146] was aware that the Czechs had good reasons to oppose Henlein's schemes. Therefore, his declaration that 'while there are explosive elements which may easily be touched off at some moment of hysteria, the state of Europe is in reality more balanced than it was six months ago',[147] is in disregard of the Realpolitik.

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[143] NAA AA1972/341, 83, 'Personal Papers of Prime Minister J. A. Lyons', Item 214760. Ministerial Delegation, 1938 – letters to and from prime minister and ministers abroad (contains personal correspondence of the prime minister with members of 1938 trade delegation, Sir Earl Page (Minister for Trade) T. W. White (Minister for Commerce) and R. G. Menzies (Attorney-General)); letter from Robert G. Menzies to Joseph Lyons, 6 August 1938.

[144] 'World War Not Inevitable', *SMH* (12 September 1938).

[145] Ibid.

[146] Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, 158.

Menzies' approach to the situation can be considered a showcase of political defragmentation when it comes to his assessment of foreign affairs. Upon his return to Australia he admitted that he did not possess the knowledge to pass judgement on the situation, although noting 'I want to warn you against any easy falling into habits than […] of saying that dictatorships are bound to be wrong and democracies to be right'.[148] This is a clear declaration of political disorientation. While being committed to the spirit of the policy of appeasement, Menzies was also convinced that Hitler was a reasonable person with whom one could negotiate, even after the German army overran Czechoslovakia in March 1939.[149] Significantly, Menzies, one of Australia's most acclaimed barristers, failed to realize that in the case of Czechoslovakia there had been a miscarriage of justice.

Although Menzies' position and the experiences he gained during his tour of Europe in 1938 were of value, Australian foreign policy decisions were in fact determined by Prime Minister Joseph Aloysius Lyons (1879–1939*)*. As discussed above, Lyons was kept informed of developments in Central Europe through British government channels.[150] In assessing the situation Lyons was assisted by Bruce and his assistants at the High Commission, as well as by Menzies and Percival Liesching, the British High Commissioner in Australia.[151] Lyons was a very popular prime minister, in office from 1932 to 1939, although he was belittled by Bruce. Menzies, on the other hand, expressed appreciation of Lyons, commenting: 'he succeeded in his task (and) in his undemonstrative way, he illustrated the moral force of leadership'.[152] In terms of the Czechoslovak crisis, Lyons strongly supported the policy of appeasement. He was convinced that Britain's conduct of foreign policy was correct, a view he expressed in numerous cables demonstrating strong support and admiration of Chamberlain.[153] However, unlike many other politicians, he did express abhorrence at the oppression of Catholics and Jews, which he termed 'German barbarity'.[154] Given this low opinion of Germany, what then motivated Lyons to become one of Australia's 'Men of Munich', where twelve months later 'too much egg covered too many faces'?[155]

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[147] 'World War Not Inevitable', *SMH* (12 September 1938).

[148] 'Menzies' Views on Europe', *The Argus* (17 September 1938).

[149] Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, 166.

[150] 'Australia fully informed', *SMH* (12 September 1938).

[151] Liesching was critical of the Australian Cabinet, declaring that it lacked experience in dealing with the situation.

[152] Anne Henderson, 'Joseph Aloysius Lyons', in Martin and Grattan, eds, *Australian Prime Ministers*, 156–157.

As the person responsible for safeguarding Australia's vital interests, Lyons was in agreement with colleagues at home and overseas that the situation in the Sudetenland should not be a cause for war. At the same time, he was also concerned that the country he led would lose valuable export outlets, that it would be endangered should Germany attempt to regain control of its former colonies, now under Australia's administration, and that Japan was expanding its influence in the region. His was a deeply felt moral obligation to secure Australia's survival. It was for these reasons that he was in agreement with Chamberlain. In addition, many fellow citizens supported these policies. Given that Australia was far away from the centre of the conflict and its limited military resources would not have withstood a hostile attack on her territory, Lyons' stance is understandable. Yet he was also clearly keenly aware of 'German barbarity' and still did not acknowledge that Czechoslovakia deserved every assistance in its struggle to preserve its integrity in the face of Hitler's demands. On account of this failure to do so, the morality of his leadership must be considered to have been compromised.

At no time was this more evident than on 29 September 1938 when Lyons rose at midnight in the House of Representatives to deliver a long awaited speech to the nation, informing them of the Munich Agreement. This speech is uninspiring, flawed and lacking in originality. As expected, he presents a summary of events beginning in May with the emphasis on the positive role played by the British government and in particular by

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[153] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 459, 469, 294.

[154] Quoted in Robert Murray, 'Munich revisited, 1930s, German-Australian relations', *Quadrant* 42/6 (1998), 46–52

[155] Ibid, 46–52.

Chamberlain's claim to ensure 'peace in our time'. Further, his assertion that the Czechoslovak government requested the mediation of Britain in the person of Lord Runciman is misleading.[156] Later, when reading the part describing the act of German aggression Lyons makes it clear:

> The German proposals were a de facto ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposition to a foreign State, which had shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe.[157]

Lyons mistakenly attributes this statement to Chamberlain when, in fact, the protest was issued by the Czechoslovak government itself. This faux pas was recognized by Downing Street and Bruce was informed.[158] In his conclusion, Lyons repeats excerpts from Franklin D. Roosevelt's message, in which the President had previously declared that 'the Government of Great Britain [...] with the support of the Government of Australia has made every effort to preserve the world's peace'. Lyons states: 'Our hands are clean. We have done our best to keep the peace. We have no selfish interest to serve. Even as the clouds gather about us we still hope that peace may be preserved'.[159] Czechoslovakia's fate was sealed on 30 September 1938 in Munich amidst euphoria resounding throughout the British Commonwealth and thanksgiving services in churches across Australia.

Not many politicians stood by the Czechs during those crucial months, although, some did. One of these was Sir Joseph Cook. In an article published by the *SMH* on 24 May 1938, he tells readers that Czechoslovakia is a successful state, that its minorities are treated well and that the crisis in the Sudetenland has been engineered as a result of the expansionist policies of its powerful neighbour.[160] In addition, the most important Australian politician to stand up for Czechoslovakia was William Morris Hughes (1862–1952). The ageing former prime minister of Australia (1915–1923) was sidelined by members of Lyons' Cabinet because he urged using force against German fascism,[161] insisting that Australia should be armed to its teeth.[162] His views on the Czechoslovak crisis leave no doubt that they were not in line with those of his colleagues. As will be seen in the following chapter, which will focus on the reaction of members of the Federal Parliament, Hughes stood firmly on the side of Czechoslovakia, condemning those who voiced their approval to saving the peace by submitting to Hitler's dictate. These views were also strongly held by Winston Churchill. Upon Chamberlain's triumphal return from Munich to London, Churchill rose in the House of Commons and to the displeasure of most Members of Parliament, delivered his vision of the approaching doom.[163]

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[156] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part I', Item 174718. Circular telegram, no. 183, from the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs of 25 July 1938. See also NAA A2908, C34, 'Situation in Czechoslovakia 1938–1939', Item 230423.

[157] NAA A981, CZE 21, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Germany – Letters and Despatches (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3–E/42/215/50)', Item 174722. Prime Minister Lyons' speech in the House of Representatives, 29 September 1938. See also Annual Report by the Right Hon. W. M. Hughes, Minister for External Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, Parliamentary Papers General 1937–38–39, vol. 3, III, 1569, 33.

[158] NAA A2908, C34, 'Situation in Czechoslovakia 1938–1939', Item 230423. Letter from T. J. Harding to J. S. Duncan, Sq. CBE, 3 October 1938.

[159] NAA A2908, C34, 'Situation in Czechoslovakia 1938–1939', Item 230423.

At the other end of the world, in Ashfield, one of the inner suburbs of Sydney, J. A. McCallum wrote the following letter to the editor of the *SMH* on 7 October 1938:

> I hate to raise ethical issues, but, making no judgment of my own, I place against the opinion of a Prime Minister who is 'not ashamed' and that of an Archbishop of Canterbury who thinks there has been no injustice, the judgment of a great historian who lived when Britain was great: 'The moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. For every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression [...] the price has to be paid at last; not always by the chief offenders, but paid by someone'.[164]

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[160] NAA M3612 20, '(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Sir Joseph Cook on Czechoslovak borders)', Item 3159209 and 'Czechoslovakia – How borders were decided', *SMH* (24 May 1938).

[161] Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, 157, 159, 160.

[162] Letter to the Editor, *SMH* (6 October 1938).

[163] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 294.

[164] Letter to the Editor, *SMH* (12 October 1938). The writer refers to the Archbishop of Canterbury's declaration in the House of Lords on 3 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1297–366.

Nevertheless, Australia was not in a position to formulate its own foreign policy at this time. Moreover, while the cession of the Sudetenland was viewed by many in Australia as a move towards saving world peace, this was not to be. The heavy price paid by Australia and its people during the coming war as a result of putting its faith into decisions made by British politicians was to result in a change to the course of its policies in the years to come. Within a short number of years, Australia had moved from the British to the American orbit, due in part to the role played by the United States in Australia's defence during the Second World War, when Britain was occupied fighting for her own survival.

CHAPTER 4

1938: Australian Responses to the Munich Agreement

> We may realize now just what the captains of Aemilianus Severus must have felt and thought when at Ravenna they looked out over the palisades and saw the Alemanni dancing and shouting beside their camp-fires, the hair of the young men streaming in the wind, the fat men leaping and cavorting in the moonlight, the little witch doctor murmuring over his enchantments and the chiefs sitting apart beneath the human heads transfixed by the tall frameae wrapped in mysticism, meditating the future.[1]
>
> — J. M. K. PHILLIPS (1938)

These were the concluding words of an essay by J. M. K. Phillips that appeared in the *Australian Quarterly*, a journal favoured by Australia's intellectual elite. Published two and a half months after the Munich Agreement was signed, 'The Czechoslovakian Debacle' was an obituary for a country whose independence had been obliterated by the stroke of four pens. President Beneš was not invited to the conference to defend Czechoslovakia's position. Instead, he was handed the result of the proceedings, instrumental to the annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany.[2] Czechoslovakia's enforced submission to Hitler's dictate was supposed to herald a new and safer future for the country after peripheral regions had been handed over to Germany, Hungary and Poland. Its borders were to be guaranteed by Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Yet, as a result of Britain's policy of appeasement, Czechoslovakia became entirely vulnerable to Hitler's will. Winston Churchill expressed this thought when he

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[1] J. M. K. Phillips, 'The Czechoslovakian Debacle', *Australian Quarterly* 10/4 (1938), 30–40. Alemanni: Latin for Germanic; Frameae: spears used by ancient Germanic tribes in combat.

[2] Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini signed the Munich Agreement.

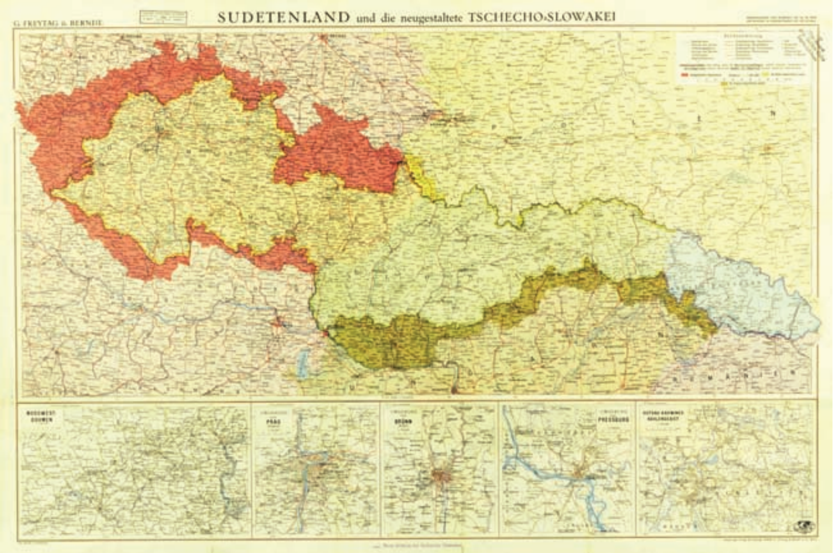

Figure 4.1: Map of Czechoslovakia. Source: Národní Archiv, Praha (NA, P), Sbírka map a plánů (SMP), nezpracovaná část.

wrote about the Anschluss and Munich in 1938: 'Now, ten years later, let the past be the guide'.[3]

The attitude in Australian government circles, the Federal Parliament, some sections of the Australian press and the public was that the 1919 punitive measures enforced on Germany after its defeat in the First World War had been detrimental to its recovery. Moreover, it was asserted that the creation of Czechoslovakia was at the root of the current problems, given the alleged persecution of its German minority by a hostile Slav government. Therefore, the enforcement of Czechoslovakia's submission to Hitler's dictate, with the support of Britain, its allies and dominions, was considered appropriate. Importantly, it was perceived as vital for the preservation of peace. The memory of the 56,000 Australians who lost their lives on the battlefields of Europe during the First World War was ever present. Appeasement was not considered an act of capitulation to Hitler, but rather a modus operandi for reconciling international disputes through diplomacy.[4] Plus, when we consider the losses that Britain suffered during the First World War, support for the new policy becomes even more understandable.

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[3] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 229. See also A. Lentin, 'Appeasement at the Paris Peace Conference 1919', in Michael Dockrill and John Fisher, eds, *The Paris Peace Conference 1919: Peace without Victory?* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 103–115.

However, over the subsequent twelve months the Australian public gradually came to realize that the policy of appeasement was in fact illusionary. It was to be defeated by Hitler's ongoing aggression. Sir Keith Hancock, a prominent Australian scholar and biographer of General Jan Smuts, recalls that the general's comment that 'the very word "appeasement", which for long both in its English and French versions signified reconciliation, became a word of abuse'.[5] Remembering the debate at Westminster upon Chamberlain's return from Munich, Churchill comments on 'the emotions aroused and the issues at stake'. Examination of the *Hansard* records of the British parliament reveals a climate of acrimonious debate in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Both Chambers were divided in their assessment of the Czechoslovak crisis.[6] This was not the case in the Australian Federal Parliament, which largely praised Chamberlain's decision. In order to understand the points of reference that united and divided politicians in both countries, it is important to analyse how the Munich Agreement's implications were understood in Britain, the centre of world politics, and in Australia.

In the days following the signing of the Munich Agreement, weeks of tension gave way to relief as fears surrounding the possible outbreak of war were dispelled. Chamberlain's declaration on his arrival from Munich that 'peace in our time' had been achieved was welcomed by many. Yet, the British Parliament was divided in its opinion on the agreement. There were those who believed that a satisfactory outcome was reached at Munich not only for the Germans but also for Czechoslovakia, whose ceded regions, they believed, provided the country with correctly adjusted and secure borders. On the other hand, there were parliamentarians on both sides of the political divide with a clear perspective of what Hitler's intentions were: by dismantling the Czechoslovak state he would gain control over Eastern and Southern Europe. The debates that addressed the outcome of the agreement, both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords, were intense and often implacable.[7]

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[4] Ovendale, 'Appeasement', 152–167.

[5] Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938–1965*, 6.

[6] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 292.

There were, however, points of reference that were common to all who participated in the debates: gratitude to Chamberlain and Lord Halifax for averting war as well as admiration for the people and the government of Czechoslovakia for their courage, restraint and dignity. Beneš, in particular, was credited for his contribution to the 'successful' outcome of the crisis. Moreover, the necessity of providing financial aid to reconstruct Czechoslovakia's destroyed infrastructure and people's lives was on everyone's mind.

There is no doubt that politicians in Britain were well informed about the internal situation of Czechoslovakia with regard to the Sudeten dispute. Although Chamberlain's claim that peace was saved by appeasement, many based their opinion on experiences gained during their own visits to the country, on the study of its history, as well as interpretation of policies and circumstances surrounding the deep-rooted animosities dividing the republic's ethnic minorities. In addition, those who supported the Munich outcome were also influenced by conclusions arrived at by Lord Runciman during his mission to Czechoslovakia.

During the Westminster debates, supporters of the agreement presented various reasons for their position: Sir Thomas Inskip (Conservative), Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence claimed that no sane government would restore and recreate Czechoslovakia within its former boundaries, knowing what these evils had given rise to. This view was also held by Edward L. Burgin (Liberal National), the Minister for Transport and Captain John McEwen (Conservative), who stated that there was an assumption that because Hitler bluffed [*sic*] in 1936 he was also bluffing in

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[7] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, 5th series, vol. 339 (1938), cc 30, 31–34, 39, 40, 47–52, 54, 56–58, 62–63, 150–154, 162, 360–369, 373 and 548–553. All of these debates took place in October 1938.

1938. During the debates in the House of Commons in October 1938, Sir John Simon (Liberal National), the Chancellor of the Exchequer, argued that France and Britain had saved the country from destruction.

Interestingly, George Lansbury (Liberal), raised the issue of refugees at the very beginning of the debates in the House of Commons, suggesting that the Dominions should open their borders to refugees from Czechoslovakia. The refugee crisis, however, did not discredit the agreement reached at Munich in the eyes of those who approved of it. As the British historian John Wheeler-Bennet writes, 'Munich was a case study in the disease of political myopia'.[8]

On the other hand, there were parliamentarians who strongly opposed the Agreement. The most dramatic speech was delivered by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Alfred Duff Cooper (Conservative) who warned that a European war would ensue. Criticizing the prime minister for seeking to win the dictator over with 'sweet reasonableness' instead of sending him a 'mailed fist', he announced his resignation, declaring that he was proud that 'I can still walk about the world with my head erect'.[9]

Churchill also rose in the House of Commons and delivered a speech in defence of Czechoslovakia, pointing an accusing finger at the British government for caving in to Hitler's demands, thus 'sweeping away the safety of France and giving Hitler the chance to reach valuable materials to fuel his war machinery'. He then declared:

> (This) is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup, which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.[10]

Churchill's statement was supported by William Gallagher (Labour),[11] Eleanor Rathbone (Independent, Combined English Universities), Colonel

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[8] John Wheeler-Bennet, *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1948), 437.

[9] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, 5th series, vol. 339 (1938), cc 30, 31–34, 39, 40, 47–52, 54, 56–58, 62–63, 150–154, 162, 360–369, 373 and 548–553 and Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 291–292.

[10] Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 294.

[11] Gallagher saw the Munich debacle also as a betrayal of Britain.

Josiah Wedgewood (Labour), Sir Archibald Sinclair (Liberal), Anthony Eden (Conservative), Arthur Henderson (Labour),[12] and Richard Law (Conservative),[13] who, together with other parliamentarians emphasized the democratic principles upheld by Czechoslovakia. Of importance was the speech given to parliament by Clement Attlee, the leader of the opposition who made it clear that what had taken place was a victory of brute force over the last fortress of democracy and that the Czechs had been deserted by those in whom they had placed their trust.

The outcome of the Munich Agreement was also debated in the House of Lords, where the majority of its members approved the British government's approach to the solution of the Czechoslovak problem. The most controversial speech was given by Lord Samuel who was Jewish. While denouncing the persecution of Jews by the Nazi regime, Samuel threw his support behind the Munich Agreement because he believed that there was no moral justification for oppressing the Sudeten Germans. He maintained that it was correct to negotiate with Hitler in the interest of preserving peace. Samuel's support of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement was in stark contrast to those members of Parliament who condemned it.[14]

Amongst those who strongly supported Czechoslovakia were Lord Strabolgi,[15] Lord Lloyd,[16] Lord Davies,[17] Lord Cecil,[18] as well as Lord Marley who declared: 'we are witnessing the victory of force and threats on small nations throughout Europe'.[19] One of the most outspoken defenders of Czechoslovakia was Lord Snell who stated that 'we have obtained peace for ourselves by giving away territory that did not belong to us, and by despoiling a small and helpless people'.[20] However, these critics were in the minority and it was a matter of conscience that made them throw their support behind Czechoslovakia.

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[12] Henderson spoke about his experience when touring Czechoslovakia and stated that the problem was not to be found in Prague but in Berlin.

[13] Law maintained that those who have risen to power through violence and treachery have suddenly been convinced 'by the magic eye of the Prime Minister' that 'violence and treachery do not pay'.

[14] *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, House of Lords, International Relations, 4 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1367–1432.

[15] Lord Strabolgi, *Debates in the House of Lords*, 4 October 1938. On his visit to Australia in early 1939 Lord Strabolgi denounced the Munich Treaty in his Speech at the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney on 1 February 1939. See 'European Game', *SMH* (2 February 1939).

[16] *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, House of Lords, 4 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1367–1432.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid. 3 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1297–1366.

So, what was the response to the Munich Agreement in Australia? On 26 October 1938 a file prepared by Alfred Stirling was submitted to Prime Minister Lyons.[21] It contained Stirling's letters informing Colonel Hodgson and Frank Strahan, the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, about the concluding session of debates on the Munich Agreement in the House of Commons. His account centres on three aspects of the debate – the necessity to save peace, the resolution of the crisis, and the opposition to the agreement expressed by Churchill and other Members of Parliament. Stirling expresses approval of Chamberlain's speech. He summarizes Chamberlain's efforts to avert war and to save British subjects throughout the Empire from its horrors. He also makes note of Chamberlain's relief that France had abrogated her duties towards Czechoslovakia,[22] resulting from French allegations that the Czechs did not abide by Britain's advice to concede to the demands of the Sudeten Germans. Reporting on Churchill's position, it is more than obvious that Stirling strongly disagrees with him.[23]

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[19] Ibid. 5 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1433–1505.

[20] Ibid. 3 October 1938, vol. 110, cc 1297–1366.

[21] NAA AA1972/341, 95, 'Copies of Letters Nos 86 (dated 7 October 1938), 87 (dated 12 October 1938) and 88 (dated 14 October 1938) from Alfred Stirling, External Affairs Liaison Officer in London to Secretary Hodgson of Department of External Affairs, Canberra reporting on reaction in Britain to the Munich Agreement including the debate in British Parliament', Item 214739.

[22] Czechoslovakia, the USSR and France signed a treaty of mutual assistance on 25 January 1924, which stipulated that two countries would come to the assistance of the third in case of aggression launched by a third power.

[23] Stirling quotes from an excerpt from Churchill's speech in the House of Commons. The date when the speech was given is not mentioned by Stirling. It is, however, included in his letter to Colonel Hodgson, dated 12 October 1938.

Stirling also reports on a meeting that he attended at Chatham House[24] called to discuss the recent crisis. Apart from alluding to the presence of supporters of Czechoslovakia (Seton-Watson, Wickham Steed and Waley Cohen), he also mentions the attendance of Lord Samuel who was in agreement with the policy of appeasement, which was 'not only common-sense, but courageous in view of the fact that there were a great many Jewish people present who obviously held very different views'.[25]

Even though the Czechoslovak crisis and the Munich Agreement were a matter of concern to the Australian government, it nevertheless chose to keep information on the crisis out of the public domain. Surprisingly, members of the Federal Parliament were initially not advised on the state of affairs in Europe; nor were they informed about policies that were being pursued to bring the situation under control and, importantly, about possible Australian military involvement, should Britain enter the war. This reality was in line with Bruce's insistence 'that it is necessary in view of the delicacy of the present situation, to consider all reports to be confidential'.[26] It was only in late September 1938 that the Federal Parliament was drawn into a debate on developments in Europe. Thus, while their British counterparts were intimately acquainted with the situation and held firm views on its consequences, Australian parliamentarians, in their majority, did not fully comprehend the implications of the Munich dictate.

Predictably, most Australian politicians welcomed Chamberlain's intervention and credited him with saving world peace. Sessions in the Senate and the House of Representatives in Canberra were not marred by stormy deliberations, nor by the resignation of a single minister. However, as was the case in Britain, the few politicians who did criticize the outcome of the Munich Agreement in Federal Parliament, also crossed the party divide.[27]

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[24] The date of the meeting is not mentioned.

[25] NAA AA1972/341, 95, 'Copies of Letters Nos 86 (dated 7 October 1938), 87 (dated 12 October 1938) and 88 (dated 14 October 1938) from Alfred Stirling, External Affairs Liaison Officer in London to Secretary Hodgson of Department of External Affairs, Canberra reporting on reaction in Britain to the Munich Agreement including the debate in British Parliament', Item 214739.

[26] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 3, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany – the Sudeten Dispute and the Munich Agreement, September 1938, Part III', Item 174720.

Most members were convinced that peace by negotiation would be the prelude to a new era.[28] According to the acting leader of the House, Sir Earle Page (Country Party), the Munich Agreement was advantageous to Czechoslovakia[29] and faith must now be put in the international commission to guarantee the country's new boundaries. However, Page misled parliament when he declared that foodstuffs, goods, cattle and all raw materials could be taken by those Czechs who were escaping from areas now ceded to Germany.[30] Other politicians gave expressions of gratitude to the Czechs for saving world peace by acquiescing to German demands. Moreover, some politicians expressed the hope that the British government would provide Czechoslovakia with financial assistance in compensation for its losses.

Significantly, the problem of Australia's dependence on the British Foreign Office was repeatedly brought to the assembly's attention. Percy Spender (Independent UAP), who raised the issue, declared that it was only 'a pale reflection of whatever might be the foreign policy of Britain for the time being'.[31] He claimed that the Führer of Germany could not in any case commit his country to war because the people of Germany would strongly oppose it. Having made his views on the internal situation in Germany known, he then accused Czechoslovakia of arrogance 'quite out of proportion to its own importance'. Spender acknowledged that Chamberlain's peace with Hitler 'would have caused every decent man to hang his head in shame' but he hoped that there had 'been a change in the man'.[32]

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[27] References to all debates in this part of the chapter are based on the *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, First Session of the Fifteenth Parliament, Second Period, 2 GEO VI, vol. 157, from 21 September 1938 to 16 November 1938, Senate and House of Representatives.

[28] Senator Joseph Collins (ALP), *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 5 October 1938, 350.

[29] Ibid. 89–391.

[30] Ibid. See also Eric Montgomery Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia*, 141.

[31] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 5 October 1938, 404.

Jack Beasley (ALP) accused the government of not disseminating information on events taking place overseas and demanded to know the content of government communications regarding commitments given to Britain.[33] Beasley was aware of the dangerous situation and, therefore, urged the government to distance itself from events in Europe. Josiah Francis (UAP) was convinced that democracies had 'brought Hitler to heel and that it was as good as any certainty that he will not fight'.[34] Harold Holt (UAP) was most supportive of Chamberlain. While he did not refer to Czechoslovakia, he expressed admiration for Hitler. He was in awe of Germany's 'Drang nach Osten policy' (push toward the East) and although he argued that Hitler was 'perhaps unscrupulous in his methods, but consistent in his objectives [...] of long range policies'.[35] Moreover, Holt also referred to *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler professed the extermination of France to provide 'Lebensraum' (living space) fit for the Germans. At the same time, Holt supported Chamberlain's conviction that Hitler could be trusted.

Robert Menzies (UAP) praised Chamberlain, while denouncing those who deplored the lack of independent Australian foreign policy. According to Menzies, Britain valued Australia's views on the Czechoslovak impasse. Menzies praised Runciman for providing 'a fair and dispassionate judgment'.[36] He stated that everybody, therefore, ought to admire Chamberlain for his efforts to bring the crisis to a satisfactory conclusion.

Chamberlain's efforts to secure an agreement at Czechoslovakia's expense were also supported by the leader of Australia's Labor Party. John

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[32] Ibid. 404.

[33] Ibid. 409. Beasley must have been unaware that the Australian government had been supplied with reports on the political situation worldwide since the end of the First World War. See also NAA A981, CZE 7, Part 2, 'Czechoslovakia Annual Reports Part II', Item 174705.

[34] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 5 October 1938, 415.

[35] Ibid. 421.

[36] Ibid. 424.

Curtin who, not unlike Lyons, was also primarily concerned that the security of Australia would be jeopardized if the country were again involved in a war on a distant continent. In his opinion, the outcome of the Versailles Treaty was in an imbalance of power in Europe which, fuelled by underlying economic difficulties and racial enmities, was endemic to that continent and had been evident throughout its history. Curtin accused Britain, France and Russia of supporting the Czechs whom he blamed for reneging on commitments made to the Sudeten Germans.[37]

At the same time, Curtin berated the Australian government for withholding information from parliament and the people of Australia because the issue was about the struggle of democracy and dictatorships. He also asserted that in Australia criticism of government policies was considered disloyal and of 'treasonable intent'.[38] He contrasted this with the situation in Germany, alleging that the German press was free to cheer the British prime minister and to quote remarks made by the British government. Notwithstanding his own declaration, Curtin then denounced those sections of the Australian press that urged Australians to rally behind Czechoslovakia. All of this points to a lack of understanding of the international situation and is in sharp contrast to the reaction of Clement Attlee, discussed above.

Yet, there were parliamentarians who strongly opposed the Munich Agreement and stood firm in their support for Czechoslovakia in October 1938. Eddie Ward (ALP) was scathing about the British government's failure to oppose Hitler and had harsh words for its complicity in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Having expressed satisfaction that war was averted, Ward stressed that he believed that Germany would strive to acquire additional territory. Defending Czechoslovakia, Ward pointed out that Britain was responsible for the present situation by concluding the Anglo-German naval agreement, an issue that had not been raised previously. He stated that the victorious allies could have prevented the rise of Hitler but 'instead created a Frankenstein monster'.[39] Ward did not hesitate to draw the attention of the Federal Parliament to the fact that while Hitler demanded the Sudetenland to allegedly protect German nationals, the ruthless suppression of his own subjects was conveniently disregarded. Ward, who was a strong supporter of Jewish refugees, made it clear that Hitler's aim was not only the expropriation of Czechoslovakia's industries but a further division of the country.

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[37] Ibid. 396.

[38] Ibid. 393.

[39] Ibid. 415.

Support for Czechoslovakia was again expressed in parliament on 23 November 1938. William Joseph Hutchinson (UAP), stood up in defence of Czechoslovakia:

> Almost since the signing of the Treaty of Versailles certain countries have adopted a policy which cannot be described as other than blackmail [...]. The culmination took place at Munich where we had in some respects a sorry spectacle of three nations meeting to determine what should be done to Czechoslovakia, a small democracy which since its inception had been loyal to the spirit of democracy and had treated its minorities better than minorities are treated by any other country in Europe, undoubtedly better than they are treated in Germany [...]. On the debit side two things emerged from the Munich discussions: first, that the small country of Czechoslovakia was to be carved into pieces for the benefit of the larger country of Germany, and secondly, a loss of prestige of democracy throughout Central Europe. On the credit side we have to take into consideration that, for the first time in world politics, since the politics of armed blackmail was adopted, the democracies came to the point of discussing terms and prepared, if necessary, to back their demands by force. That aspect possibly marks the turning point in world affairs [...][40]

However, it was Billy Hughes, the Minister of External Affairs who pointed to Hitler as the aggressor and noted that Czechoslovakia had not treated the Sudeten Germans unjustly. In a rousing speech that left no one in doubt on whose side he stood, Hughes turned to Curtin and declared:

> The Honourable member's policy is not one that faces reality at all. It is a policy that walks in the shadows, it is a policy of despair and suicide for Australia. The dark clouds

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[40] *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 23 November 1938, 1943.

> that lowered overseas a week ago have for a moment been swept away, but nothing has actually changed; the danger is still there and the clouds of war will gather again.[41]

Hughes' attitude towards the situation in 1938 should be regarded as one politician's individual effort to develop the concept of an independent foreign policy for Australia. Above all, it was Hughes' resolution to take sides with Czechoslovakia which stood out. As will be seen, this was also the case when Hitler dissolved Czechoslovakia in March 1939. To paraphrase Fry's statement, Hughes' stance should be seen as a triumph of evidence over idées fixes, of the inductive over the deductive, at a time when action was required out of belief, not conviction.[42]

Following the signing of the Munich Agreement the question of future trading with Czechoslovakia was raised in Federal Parliament on 12 October 1938. Sir Charles Marr (UAP), drew the attention of the House to the fact that two thirds of Czechoslovakia's export manufacturing industries were now in German hands. The issue was also raised by Beasley who declared that there had been a change in the ownership of export companies. Yet, Thomas White (UAP) Minister for Trade and Customs, countered that the industries were still Czech owned. Notwithstanding Marr's rejection of White's statement, it was evident that the minister had misled parliament.[43] It is not known whether the prime minister realized that Czech/Jewish ownership of industry in the Sudetenland passed into German hands.[44] Nonetheless, Lyons' assertion that 'if Germany was prepared to enter into a trade agreement with Australia [...] it would be found that political consideration did not stand in the way of an agreement', detracts from the previous condemnation of 'German barbarity'.[45]

The isolationism of Australia, its leaders' lack of experience in international affairs, the fear of possible Australian involvement in armed conflict and her dependence on British policies were all evident in the debates in the Australian Federal Parliament. There were only three Members of Parliament who raised objections to the government's attitude towards the Munich Agreement. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of Australia's elected representatives dismissed their arguments, in spite of the fact that throughout 1938 the Australian media submitted evidence in support of those very arguments.

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[41] *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 5 October 1938, 399–400.

[42] Fry, 'Agents and Structures: The Dominions and the Czechoslovak Crisis', 293–341.

[43] *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 12 October 1938, 626.

[44] See Chapter 5 'The Aftermath of the Munich Agreement'.

[45] Murray, 'Munich revisited, 1930s, German-Australian relations', 46–52.

The Australian Media

Even though the Australian Federal Parliament did not debate the Czechoslovak crisis until September, newspaper reports, editorials, letters to the editors and radio broadcasts did cover developments in Central Europe throughout 1938. When examining the part played by the Australian press during the period under discussion it is first necessary to determine the criteria for the evaluation of information for release to the public: what policies were pursued by press agencies? To what extent were government policies – British, Australian and foreign – supported or discredited by the media? In what way did individual newspapers in Australia respond to the crisis? How accurate was the news coverage? How was the Czechoslovak crisis assessed by individual editors? And in what way did journalists impact on the views of the Australian public. This section will examine the coverage of the crisis by four major Australian newspapers in particular – the *Bulletin*, *The Argus*, *The Age* and the *SMH.* These newspapers were chosen because they reflect the variety of interpretations, the differences in the perception of events and editorial analysis thereof by individual editors.

Until the mid-1930s, the British press agency Reuters had been the primary disseminator of world news in the English-speaking world. However, in 1935 Keith Murdoch established the Australian Associated Press (AAP), a conglomerate incorporating fourteen newspapers. From then on, both Reuters and the AAP shared the task of news reporting in Australia. In general terms, reporting on world events from both outlets was influenced by attitudes in London. The Australian government, however, did not interfere with editorial policies and, as will be seen, editorial positions in individual newspapers differed considerably on the issue of Czechoslovakia.[46]

In a study on the Australian political scene in the period preceding the outbreak of the war, Eric Montgomery Andrews reproduces a cartoon, published in the *Bulletin* on 26 July 1938 in which two farmers stand behind a fence, musing over the international situation. One says: 'They tell me that things are not too good in Europe, Dave', to which the neighbour replies: 'What's wrong? Drought'?[47] The cartoon was supposed to draw attention to the ignorance of the population with regard to events taking place overseas. But was this the case? According to Andrews there was indeed an overwhelming sense of detachment and disinterest in foreign affairs, an opinion, as will be seen, that was shared by William McMahon-Ball, a prominent Australian intellectual.[48]

Perhaps the most informed and enlightening view during the early stage of the evolving crisis comes from the *Australian Quarterly*, a journal of high standing in Australia' intellectual circles. As early as 1 March 1938, less than two weeks prior to Hitler's incorporation of Austria, the periodical foresaw a conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia. In the article 'Central Europe – A Blurred International Horizon', Arthur Clinton Morgan demonstrates his insight into the situation when he notes:

> This young republic is the only existing democracy in Central Europe as we understand the term democracy […]. If democracy in Czecho-Slovakia should be brought to a nullity by dictatorship policies, or overthrown by dictatorship force of arms, then democracy everywhere would be confronted with a challenge of major significance'.[49]

This assessment of Czechoslovakia's free fall into world politics was presented accurately at a time when the country's internal situation was, as yet, of no concern to many Australians.

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[46] William McMahon-Ball, *Press, Radio and World Affairs: Australia's Outlook* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1938).

[47] Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia*, 5.

[48] McMahon-Ball, *Press, Radio and World Affairs*, 24.

[49] Morgan, 'Central Europe, A Blurred International Horizon', 92.

The *SMH* was quick to follow in assessing the scene in the first of its many editorials relating to events in Czechoslovakia. The newspaper presented a well-defined assessment of the Sudeten Germans' situation – even-handed treatment and according civil rights to minorities in democratic Czechoslovakia in the face of Nazi propaganda.[50] The editorial also informed its readers of the cultural and national advances of the Sudeten Germans, the quota of Sudeten Germans active in state service, their representation in parliament and Cabinet. The paper thus took the initiative in seeking to provide background information on the emerging problem to its readers.

In contrast, *The Age* of Melbourne took a different stand, stating: 'The Czechs must make even greater concessions'.[51] Articles in *The Age* reported on acts of terrorism occurring but concluded that they were instigated by the Czechs themselves. The editorial praised Chamberlain's appeasement policy, stressing that the British Commonwealth should not get involved in the matter.[52] *The Age*, however, did not completely repudiate problems in Nazi Germany when it published an article written by Ronald Selkirk Panton about the plight of German Jews, pointing out that the Sudeten Germans 'live like princes' compared to Jews in Germany.[53]

During the European summer of 1938 the Australian press became preoccupied with the gradual deterioration of the situation in Central Europe. By September many Australians had become aware that peace was on the brink of collapse, yet readers were exposed to conflicting information on the origins of the crisis and the policies pursued by Britain, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

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[50] 'Czechs and Germans', *SMH* (29 April 1938).

[51] 'Britain will act', *The Age* (2 May 1938).

[52] 'Supreme diplomacy', *The Age* (24 May 1938).

[53] 'Jew Baiting', *The Age* (21 June 1938). Ronald Selkirk-Panton (1907–1975) was an Australian journalist working for the London *Daily Telegraph*. He was stationed in Berlin for twenty-two years, interned by the Germans in Denmark from 1940 to 1945 and was the first journalist to write about Himmler's death, whose body he saw immediately following his suicide in May 1945. Selkirk Panton was the only Australian journalist to cover the Nuremberg Trials, later witnessing the execution of Nazi war criminals. See 'Papers of Panton R. Selkirk 1901–1999' [manuscript], National Library of Australia.

Not surprisingly, the fundamentally antisemitic *Bulletin* was sympathetic to the German cause. The journal held the Czechs in contempt and condemned every politician and every newspaper in Britain that defended Czechoslovakia, which it called a 'manufactured republic'. The *SMH* was likewise censured, as were Australian intellectuals and academics who rallied to Czechoslovakia's cause.[54] The *Bulletin* also criticized those who warned of an outbreak of war in one of its editorials, entitled 'Wolf, Wolf'![55] Those who decried the sell-out of Czechoslovakia were termed 'yelpers' by the *Bulletin*. After the Munich Agreement was signed, the editor of the *Bulletin* commented: 'Only cranks wanted war. As soon as it could be ventured out with safety – they were back at their hysterical job, working their hardest to re-instil the former fears and old shabby hatreds'.[56]

Apart from expressing admiration for Chamberlain, the *Bulletin*, was also interested in presenting its readers with an 'endearing' portrayal of Hitler. It therefore published the following record of Sir Ian Hamilton's meeting with Hitler:

> There are a great many people in Britain who are obsessed with the bogey of Hitler. Herr Hitler invited me to visit him at Berchtesgaden. I found him quiet, reasonable. He told me that whenever he wanted to think things out and decide an issue he came to Berchtesgaden, where he could get the seclusion he craved. With a smile he admitted he has sometimes made vehement statements, but never there with his birds, his trees, his flowers. In that case I said, the more he was there with his birds and trees and flowers, the better we should be pleased. And I am certain, that the Hitler I saw – the quiet, reasonable Hitler – is the Führer as he really is.[57]

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[54] 'Another one for Roberts', *Bulletin* (16 November 1938).

[55] 'Wolf, Wolf', *Bulletin* (14 September 1938).

[56] 'The Yelpers Carry on', *Bulletin* (12 October 1938).

[57] *Bulletin*, 28 September 1938. Ian Hamilton was a British general and aristocrat who was in his own words 'a great admirer of the great Adolf Hitler' and who dismissed *Mein Kampf* as a youthful expression of views. He was also antisemitic. See Ian Kershaw, *Making Friends with Hitler: Lord Londonderry and the British Road to War* (London: Penguin Press HC, 2004), 54–55.

The Argus was another daily newspaper that reported in detail on the developing situation. Initially the paper's views were ambiguous. For example, on one occasion the paper pointed to Hitler as the aggressor[58] and one day later[59] it published a positive article on the Czechs and their treatment of the Sudeten Germans. With the worsening of the situation, however, it becomes obvious that the newspaper shifted its editorial policy in favour of the Nazis. On 2 September 1938, the newspaper stated that Germany had a convincing case and that Czechoslovakia was culpable because it refused to surrender what it had gained from a discredited treaty.[60] *The Argus* defended Chamberlain and approved of German demands, maintaining that the Czechs would be better off if they made concessions to Hitler. At the same time, the paper contradicted this position by publishing a positive article on Czechoslovak democracy:

> […] no state has since the war established a finer record in the treatment of minorities than Czechoslovakia but a calumny of lying and propaganda has been carried on and there are some people in this country who lent themselves to it.[61]

The editorial praised Czechoslovakia for its 'preference for peace' at a high cost to itself for which, it asserted, in the end it will be thankful.[62] However, one week later *The Argus* was scathing about Hitler.[63] On the day the Agreement was signed, the editor penned the following: 'millions of people thanked God that the hour of need had been matched with a man to meet it'.[64] Thus *The Argus* must be seen as inconsistent in evaluating the situation in Czechoslovakia. Positive assessments mingled with those that were adverse to the Czech position, as were those that assessed the German side of the dispute.

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[58] 'The Shadow of War', *The Argus* (9 September 1938).
[59] 'After the Crisis', *The Argus* (10 September 1938).
[60] 'Rights and Wrongs in Czech Dispute', *The Argus* (17 September 1938).
[61] 'Labour Leader Defends Czechs', *The Argus* (20 September 1938).
[62] 'Approach to Peace', *The Argus* (20 September 1938).
[63] 'Hitler's last Chance', *The Argus* (28 September 1938).
[64] 'A relieved world', *The Argus* (30 September 1938).

In contrast, *The Age*, of Melbourne was fairly consistent in its subservience to British foreign policy and Chamberlain himself, as is clear from its editorial of 5 September 1938:

> Whatever judgment men may pass on the policy, there can be nothing but admiration for the courage of the man who enunciated it. The instinct of gratitude therefore might well prompt intelligent, unprejudiced Australians to look beyond specific policies and to acknowledge with thankfulness the services of those in high places who are striving to safeguard the democracies.[65]

The Age, not unlike *The Argus*, was inclined to present Germany in a favourable light when it published an article, written by a young woman from Jarvis Bay, who experienced life in Germany. The paper paid tribute to German labour service camps, training young people to become good citizens.[66] The perceived responsibility of Czechoslovakia for the crisis and its skilful handling by Chamberlain was again made clear when the paper asserted that 'the danger that Prague will plunge all Europe into war over what might be a minor local issue, was avoided by a long-seeing British Prime Minister'.[67] However, two days later *The Age* referred to Hitler's blood stained purge, acknowledging that the tortured and oppressed creatures in Germany were the Jewish people.[68] Responding to the editorial, a reader on 16 September expressed admiration for British foreign policy and urged the federal government 'not to embroil Australia in conflict over an artificial polyglot state in Eastern Europe'.[69]

Nevertheless, *The Age* was not completely consistent in its analysis of the situation. At the height of the crisis, the newspaper published an editorial that in no uncertain words condemned Hitler and pitied the German people, whom the editor considered to be naively ignorant, as well as the Czechs.[70] One day later, *The Age* was ecstatic about the outcome of the Munich Agreement:

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[65] 'Statesman and Appreciation', *The Age* (5 September 1938).

[66] 'Training women to be good citizens', *The Age* (6 September 1938).

[67] 'Calmness at a crisis', *The Age* (12 September 1938).

[68] 'A respite in Europe', *The Age* (14 September 1938).

[69] 'Chamberlain's visions splendid', *The Age* (16 September 1938).

[70] 'Our hands are clean', *The Age* (29 September 1938).

> After the intensity of the preceding strain, people are entitled to break forth into joy without undue insistence or restrain; because of the talks now in progress, pessimism has given place to an optimism […]. Frank talk at Munich is being substituted for futile conflict throughout Europe under the concentrated consideration of four statesmen.[71]

The Age then praised Chamberlain as the hero.[72] The newspaper continued to advocate strong support for Chamberlain. In its editorial, entitled 'After the Rescue', *The Age* criticized those who pointed their finger in Chamberlain's direction.

> Let those who now talk recklessly and mischievously of 'dishonour', remember that mass murder on a gigantic scale would be civilization's crowning dishonour but for the splendid vision and successful statecraft of Chamberlain, that murder might have been happening now.[73]

One reader replied:

> I hope you will allow me to congratulate *The Age* on the excellent article 'After the Rescue'. It is painful to realize that there is a vocal minority sufficiently ungrateful not only to belittle but even to vilify the great statesman to whom we owe our safety.[74]

Throughout the crisis, *The Age* was committed to supporting British policies, despite the criticism of its opponents in Britain (Duff Cooper and Eden)[75] and to commending Menzies for his praise of the outcome of the Munich Agreement.[76]

In contrast, an interesting article appeared in the *SMH* on 24 May 1938 entitled 'Czechoslovakia, how boundaries were decided, Sir Joseph Cook explains', in which the former Australian prime minister and Minister for the Navy explained how the Czechoslovak border was determined at Versailles.[77] The editorial on the upcoming Nuremberg rally on

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[71] 'Is it the dawn'?, *The Age* (30 September 1938).

[72] 'The hero of the hour', *The Age* (1 October 1938).

[73] 'After the rescue' *The Age* (4 October 1938).

[74] 'After the Rescue', *The Age* (6 October 1938).

[75] 'Chamberlain's vindication', *The Age* (5 October 1938).

[76] 'Menzies upholds British Government', *The Age* (4 October 1938).

[77] Sir Joseph was a supporter of Czechoslovakia.

12 September 1938 is also significant. In contrast to *The Age*, that did not report on the rally at all, and the *Bulletin* that launched an attack on the *SMH* for its report, the *SMH* published the following editorial on the annual Nazi ritual:

> The world has since become familiar with the spectacle of organized delirium which is the annual Nazi rally but has never ceased to marvel at it. Today, as the multitudes assemble and the Fuhrer moves down from his mountain retreat to receive their adulation and to renew their faith, wonder is not unmixed with dread. What does Hitler want – living room in Europe or the supremacy of it? Does he mean peace or war?[78]

It is important to realize, though, that there had been a change in the newspaper's outlook since 1933, when the *SMH* considered Nazism preferable to communism. Following a change of editor, the newspaper became uncompromising in its condemnation of Hitler for threatening Czechoslovakia. A subsequent editorial to the one quoted above referred to Hitler and Henlein's threats to Czechoslovak sovereignty: 'In plain language, the Czech government will not submit to control from Berlin of its foreign relations, its armed forces or tolerate the undermining of its central authority by Nazi machinations, directed from beyond the Czech frontiers'.[79] The foresight of the editor was remarkable when he wrote that if Hitler succeeded in erecting a Nazi state within Czechoslovakia, he could then march in whenever he cared.[80]

The newspaper was also in awe of Czech determination not to give in to Hitler's threats.[81] Moreover the editorial headed 'Berchtesgaden and After', pointed an accusing finger at Hitler and Henlein for instigating the European crisis:

> The key to the solution is not held in Prague but at Berchtesgaden. The concerted outbreak of violence in the Sudetenland is a conspiracy to overthrow law and order […]. Henlein has been acting directly under orders from Berlin.[82]

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[78] 'At Nuremberg', *SMH* (5 September 1938).

[79] 'Prague's new offer', *SMH* (7 September 1938).

[80] 'Anxious days', *SMH* (9 September 1938).

[81] 'The Nuremberg speech', *SMH* (14 September 1938).

[82] 'Berchtesgaden and after', *SMH* (17 September 1938).

The newspaper was scathing in its criticism of the Anglo-French proposals, writing that 'Hitler shattered Czechoslovakia with one stroke at his high seat of Berchtesgaden to which all Europe goes to hear its fate'.[83] This was then followed by another editorial entitled 'Accept or Perish' in which the author noted 'Herr Hitler wants his triumph quickly, the potential victim must not be permitted time to plea or protest or to propose a mitigation of the sentence'.[84] The paper continued to publish comments critical of Hitler. 'On the Brink' reported on Hitler's speech at the Berlin Sportpalast:

> There was no trace of conciliation, the general tone of violence was in keeping with his past utterances and the references to Czechoslovakia were couched in terms of particular ferocity. The roars, which accompanied the speaker in the radio transmission, conveyed the unmistakable jungle note.[85]

Importantly, the *SMH* published Professor Stephen Roberts' article entitled 'The Law of the Thunderbolt' in which he wrote: 'the fate of millions, perhaps the future of civilization depended on the will of one man'. He feared that '[the world] was on the brink of the holocaust'.[86] In a series of essays, published in the *SMH*, Roberts added his expertise to the debate on Hitler's rising domination of Europe. He condemned the outcome of the Munich Agreement and the role of the Sudeten German leadership in conspiring to help Hitler take control of Czechoslovakia. His opinion on Hitler was based on the experience he gained while on study leave in Germany in 1936. Hitler's aggressive policy of expansion, the persecution of Jews and political opponents, were exposed in his book *The House that Hitler Built*, first published in London by Methuen in 1937.[87]

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[83] 'Hopes and Fears', *SMH* (21 September 1938). The Anglo-French proposals were submitted to the Czechoslovak government on 19 September 1938, after Chamberlain's visit to Hitler at Berchtesgaden on 15 September 1938. The proposals recommended that Czechoslovakia should cede regions with a German population above 50 per cent.

[84] 'Accept or Perish', *SMH* (22 September 1938).

[85] 'On the Brink', *SMH* (28 September 1938).

[86] 'The Law of the Thunderbolt', *SMH* (29 September 1938).

[87] D. M. Schreuder, 'Roberts, Sir Stephen Henry (1901–1971)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 16 (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002), 104–106. See

It is interesting to compare various 'letters to the editor' written during this time. While readers of *The Argus* and *The Age*, in their majority, favoured British and German policies, designed to triumph over Czechoslovakia, readers who responded to editorials and articles published in the *SMH* expressed their abhorrence over the treatment of Czechoslovakia. Newspapers also published letters from travellers, in which tourists shared their impressions of Germany and Czechoslovakia. Those who travelled through Germany were, more often than not, disturbed by what they witnessed, while those who journeyed through Czechoslovakia were impressed by the country's freedom and democracy.[88] It is also important to add that the *Canberra Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and several regional newspapers also voiced their disapproval of Hitler's policy towards Czechoslovakia and the attitude of the British and Australian governments.

Reading through Australian newspapers from the period one is aware that the preservation of peace was of primary concern to editors and journalists. Articles on developments in Czechoslovakia abounded in the press. However, with the exception of the *SMH* and the *Australian Quarterly*, the importance of defending Czechoslovakia as a means of preventing Hitler's expansion was not acknowledged in the majority of newspapers surveyed in this chapter. In general, as far as the Australian press was concerned the major focus was concern for the safety of the Empire, although the press was, nevertheless, divided in its interpretation of historical events, which were at the root of the problem.

At the height of the Czechoslovak crisis in September 1938 and in the days and weeks that followed the signing of the Munich Agreement, various organizations as well as the Australian public made their views known. Cables and letters sent to Joseph Lyons were, in their majority, critical of the outcome of the conference, of the British government's betrayal of Czechoslovakia, of Australia's support of British policies, despairing

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also E. Turner-Graham and C. Winter, eds, *National Solution in Oceania: A critical evaluation of its effect and aftermath* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 185–197.

[88] 'On the Czech Frontier', letter by Elsie Rankin, *SMH* (26 September 1938).

of Germany's aggression and expressing sorrow, solidarity and admiration for the Czechs.[89]

However, not all messages were disparaging of the policies of Britain and Australia. Some voiced their approval, although these were in the minority. Arthur Williamson and Dr Enid Robertson from Adelaide sent a cable to the prime minister asking him to install a repatriation system of quotas for the Sudeten Germans, then on 15 September Williamson demanded that the 'Sudeten Germans should be freed from Czechoslovakian control'. So did Richard R. Burton on behalf of his neighbours in North Road, Brighton, Victoria. On 16 September 1938, he wrote that Germany was entitled to a fair play and nobody should fight for a 'Treaty made country like Czechoslovakia'.[90] There was even a suggestion from A. J. Ford of Taringa, Queensland, that the Pope should intervene and appeal to Dr Beneš to 'submit and thus saving [*sic*] chaos and war', adding that praying itself would not right wrongs. The prime minister also received a litany of slander from 'an American who knows Europe well', whose hatred of Czechoslovakia and sympathies with Hitler were boundless.[91] Some petitions showed a lack of understanding of the situation, as was obvious in a letter to Lyons, sent by A. C. Bryant, the Honorary Secretary of the Read Federal Electorate of the ALP, expressing support for 'the resolute stand by Britain, France and the Soviet Union against the fascist aggressors'.[92]

In contrast, expressions of condemnation of British policies and of the Australian government, that lent its support to them, were significant. When examining letters and cables sent to the prime minister it becomes obvious that it was predominantly Australia's leftist movement that disapproved of the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, urging the Australian government to take action in order to save Czechoslovakia's democratic system and independence. The Trade Unions, women's and other non-governmental organizations likewise took up the challenge to pressure the Australian government to defend Czechoslovakia and condemn Chamberlain's policies. A. B. Piddington raised an interesting proposal in a letter to the Secretary of the NSW Branch of the League of Nations Union, in which he suggested that the Federal Parliament ought not to be bound by agreements made by the British government because these impinge on the independence of the Dominions.[93] A letter urging support for Czechoslovakia was sent to the prime minister by the Cessnock Branch of the Co-operative Women's Guild on 19 September 1938, as well as the League for Peace and Democracy Women's committee on 21 September and the Trades and Labour Council of Wollongong on 22 September 1938.[94] Interestingly enough, the Australian Council of the International Peace Campaign correctly analysed the situation in Central Europe prior to the signing of the Agreement, when it stated on 22 September 1938: 'the sacrifice of the Czech government's control of its natural and fortified frontier would leave the whole of Czechoslovakia and the whole of Central Europe at Hitler's mercy'.[95]

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[89] NAA A461, 0420/1, 'War and Peace, Germany's relations with Czechoslovakia – General Representations', Item 97423.

[90] NAA A981, CZE 22, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany, Miscellaneous Resolutions Part I', Item 174723.

[91] Ibid. Anonymous, 28 September 1938.

[92] Ibid. Letter to Lyons, 20 September 1938.

The Northern Melbourne Section of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), as well as the Footscray Branch of the CPA, appealed to Lyons to offer asylum to Czechoslovak refugees and those from other fascist countries.[96] In another letter to Lyons the same organization drew attention to fascist policies aimed at overpowering small states, accusing the prime minister of assisting Chamberlain in Czechoslovakia's destruction. These actions were deemed not to be in the interests of all Australians and, therefore, allied organizations were determined to struggle for the preservation of Czechoslovakia's democracy.[97]

The Australian Trade Union Movement adopted a similar attitude. The Railways Union of Adelaide urged Lyons to restrain fascist aggression and declare support for Czechoslovakia's independence.[98] Likewise the New South Wales branch of the Federated Clerk's Union of Australia demanded that the federal government reverse its policy of 'unquestioning support of Chamberlain's government' and oppose the aggressor with a firm policy.[99] An appeal to the federal government to grant asylum to Czech refugees and call an international conference to save Czechoslovakia's democracy was launched by the Municipality of Bourke.[100] In a meeting, held by the Council on 3 November 1938 citizens declared their 'emphatic protest against the actions of the Chamberlain and Daladier governments in the betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany'.[101] The meeting went as far as accusing the Lyons' government of fascist sympathies and appealed to the government to stand up to fascist terrorism.

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[93] NAA A461, 0420/1, 'War and Peace, Germany's relations with Czechoslovakia – General Representations', Item 97423. Letter, 6 October 1938.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid. Letter, 7 November 1938.

[97] Ibid. Letter from the Footscray Branch of the CPA, l9 November 1938.

Of significance were also letters sent to the prime minister on behalf of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the most important of which was a letter sent by the Newcastle District Assembly. It stated that the branch unanimously decided to 'emphatically protest against the federal government giving its sanction to the Munich Treaty'. Furthermore, the letter was most critical of immigration authorities, who did not allow Jewish refugees from German fascism to be admitted to Australia. They pointed out that such measures were not applied to prospective migrants from Southern Europe, but were reminiscent of the treatment afforded to Egon Erwin Kisch. The organization disapproved of the mutilation of Czechoslovakia and demanded a reversal of foreign policies pursued by the British and Australian governments. While this letter stopped short of denouncing the failure of world powers to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia's defence, its voice against the injustice was in stark contrast to the inadequate, indifferent and misinformed response of the Leader of the Opposition.[102]

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[98] Ibid. Undated letter.

[99] Ibid. Letter, 19 October 1938.

[100] Ibid. Letter from A. E. Fenton, Secretary of the ALP Branch in Bourke, NSW, 11 October 1938.

[101] Ibid. Undated letter.

[102] Ibid. Letter from E. M. Sinclair, secretary, 17 October 1938.

Women's organizations were also vocal in their criticism of the government. The Women's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia urged the Australian government to restrain fascism and support the independence of Czechoslovakia on 15 September 1938, two weeks prior to the Munich Conference.[103] Three weeks after the signing of the Agreement, the Women's Progress Club of Townsville demanded that the Australian government 'repudiate the pro-fascist policy of the British government'.[104]

Similarly, a group of South Australian journalists cabled Lyons, urging him to oppose the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and demand compensation for the Czechs in the Sudetenland.[105] Protests were also lodged by the Victorian Council of the Australian Movement Against War and Fascism on 18 October 1938, demanding that the Australian government distance itself from the agreement because Hitler was thus 'being awarded as much territory as he demanded'.[106]

The position taken by local branches of the ALP, the CPA, the Trade Unions and Labour Councils, as well as non-governmental organizations demonstrates an overwhelming support for Czechoslovakia and disagreement with the policy of the Commonwealth government. In contrast to the many Australians who voiced their support for Britain's policy towards Czechoslovakia in their letters to the editors of various daily newspapers, it is obvious that there were many Australians who were aware of the danger that Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia posed and who did not hesitate to make their views known. Thus as can be seen, there was division of opinion on the situation amongst the Australian public.

In contrast, ambiguity surrounds the reaction of the Catholic Church in Australia to the Czechoslovak crisis. While the Australian Holy Catholic Guild of St Mary and St Joseph informed the prime minister that it was a pleasure to convey their congratulations 'for the able and statesmanlike manner in which he handled the very delicate position which has faced the world during the past few weeks',[107] this was more than what the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, had to say. According to Michael Gilchrist, Mannix's reaction to Nazi takeovers was in line with that of the Pope: 'The Catholic bishops were rather low key and lacked the urgency which underlay his references to Russian communism'.[108] In Sydney Cardinal Michael Kelly sent a Pastoral Letter to Catholic Churches on 20 September 1938 for the 'October Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary' in which he asked for 'prayers for brethren of every nation, not excluding declared enemies, who all need the grace of God and shall be duly rewarded or punished in life everlasting – in Heaven and Hell for ever'! The Cardinal did not mention the crisis in Czechoslovakia, nor Nazi Germany's aggression. On the other hand, the successor to the aged cardinal, Norman Thomas Gilroy, rejoiced over averting a war that he argued would only advance the cause of Nazism or communism.[109]

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[103] Ibid. Letter from L. M. Huppatz, secretary, 15 September 1938.

[104] Ibid. Letter from V. Pritchard, and C. Hoskings, undated.

[105] Ibid. Cable from W. A. Williams of Ashfield to Lyons, 29 September 1938.

[106] Ibid.

Reading through the pages of the *Catholic Press* it appears that the main concern of the Catholic Church in Australia was stopping the advance of communist ideology worldwide and fear that the movement had established agencies in Australia.[110] The *Catholic Press* seemed oblivious to the roots of the Czechoslovakian crisis. It did not condemn Nazi Germany, although it was united in its condemnation of the Czechs. The *Catholic Press* paid tribute to the deceased Father Andrej Hlinka, the fascist leader of Slovakia, on 15 September 1938. The newspaper further misled its readers by accusing the Czechs of allegedly persecuting the Slovaks who yearned to be reunited with Hungary,[111] approved of British policies with regard to Czechoslovakia, pointed to the tyranny of the Czechs towards its ethnic minorities, as well as condemning British newspapers that opposed Hitler.

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[107] Ibid. Letter from W. J. Dellow, 19 October 1938.

[108] Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix, Priest and Patriot* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1989), 168–169.

[109] J. J. Luttrell, *Norman Thomas, Cardinal Gilroy as Archbishop of Sydney*, PhD Dissertation (Sydney: Department of History, University of Sydney, 1997), 30.

[110] Pastoral Letter upon the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Sydney Archdiocese, *Catholic Press* (November 1938).

[111] Ibid. (22 September 1938).

Another article accused the Czechs of being incompatible with regard to peace, claiming that Hungary and Poland would like to see Czechoslovakia broken up and form a strong anti-communist block to offset Germany's acquisition of the Sudetenland.[112]

The newspaper also published an editorial entitled 'The Dogs of War', strongly condemning the *SMH* for defending Czechoslovakia, praising *The Argus* for providing a true story, while also being scathing about *The News Chronicle* and Clement Attlee: 'School boys have no monopoly of howlers. Czechoslovakia has not yet reached adult life. It cannot be found on any map published 20 years ago'. Furthermore, it quoted the Bishop of Wagga Wagga who in one of his sermons alluded to 'the Jew-controlled bosses in London'.[113]

The *Catholic Freeman Journal* was the leading Catholic newspaper in Australia. On 8 September 1938, an article published by this newspaper was critical of National Socialist antagonism towards the Catholic Church and voiced its admiration for the courage of German Catholic bishops who dared to oppose Hitler's policies.[114] Moreover, in the same issue, the newspaper condemned Hitler's treatment of Jews, pointing out that Nazism, fascism and communism denied people their personal freedom. Yet, when it came to Czechoslovakia, the newspaper stood on the side of Germany. Father Barry of the Christian Brothers of Brisbane wrote an article on 16 September 1938, entitled: 'Why fight for Czechoslovakia'?, a country which according to him was 'neither a state nor a nation but an artificial contraption of a dozen different nationalities brought into existence by the Treaty of Versailles', whose problems were no business for Australia.[115]

It is significant that the newspaper condemned Hitler for oppressing Catholics and abusing human rights on the one hand, yet, on the other hand expressed confidence that Hitler did not want war. As expected, the paper praised the policies of the British and Australian prime ministers. The editorial 'The Post Mortem of Munich' congratulated Chamberlain,

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[112] Ibid.

[113] 'Rosary and Reality', *Catholic Press* (6 October 1938).

[114] *Catholic Freeman Journal* (8 September 1938).

[115] Ibid. (8 September 1938)

Hitler, Daladier and Mussolini on averting war in which Czechoslovakia would have shown a poor case for its defence and would have been wiped out of existence had it resisted. There was an expressed belief that Britain should stand aloof and devote itself to the Empire. The paper was unrelenting in its criticism of opponents to the British prime minister worldwide. As can be seen therefore, on the whole the Catholic Church in Australia was limited in its appraisal of the international situation and failed to recognize the threat posed by Hitler in the initial stage of his conquest of Europe.[116]

There is evidence of mixed feelings in the reaction to the crisis by the Protestant Church in Australia. The *Church Record* urged its readers to pray for peace and hope for reconciliation. This idea was advanced in an article written by the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr A. C. Headlam, who visited Germany and held discussions with German colleagues. His overall impression was that both nations desired peace that the language used in Britain about Hitler was so insulting that it 'may inflict great injury to the country'. Moreover, the Bishop was of the opinion that people should respect the system of other countries and should not interfere. What then followed was an account of the suffering of the German people, which, the Bishop admitted was caused by the British and therefore one should not continue scolding other nations. The article reflected the confusion of the author. On the one hand, it promoted understanding for the German cause, while on the other hand it admitted that Chamberlain might cause 'a lot of heart burnings and qualms of conscience'.[117] Then in another turn, the Bishop bemoaned the tragedy in which Germany discarded its Christian ideals and became a pagan nation. It should not be forgotten, though, this was the view of an English clergyman, not an Australian one. Nevertheless, the article was published in an Australian newspaper.

One month later the *Church Record*, commenting on the world situation, expressed its gratitude to the prime minister for the call to pray and to Chamberlain and Simon for efforts made to save peace. However, the paper made it clear that what was achieved only provided a breathing space and concerns about the future persisted due to the 'power of a godless and ruthless tyranny'.[118] The following edition of the *Church Record* then published a scathing report on the Nazis, whom it called the 'bullies of Europe'.[119] It should also be noted that neither Archbishop Howard West Kilvinton Mowll, the Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia, nor Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher, referred to events surrounding the Czechoslovak crisis.

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[116] Ibid. (13 October 1938).

[117] *Church Record* (15 September 1938).

Records of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society for 1938 are no longer available, therefore it was necessary to examine the Jewish press in order to explore the response of the Australian Jewish community to the Czechoslovak crisis. The weekly editions of the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, published in Sydney were devoted to reporting on events concerning the Sydney Jewish community and made no mention of Hitler's demands on Czechoslovakia, the Munich Agreement, nor its impact on the Jewish population of that country. The paper reported on the meaning of Jewish holidays and traditions, sermons in synagogues, Jewish life in Sydney and gave wide coverage to lives of Jewish socialites, Jewish allegiance to King and Country and to travel diaries of the community's wealthy members. As far as Jewish persecution was concerned, the newspaper reported on the situation of Jews in Germany, Austria and Poland and fundraising activities in Australia for the benefit of refugees. There were also reports on lectures by Professor Sir Norman Bentwich on the situation of Jews in the three countries and efforts made to support emigration to Palestine and Australia. Yet, the situation in Czechoslovakia received no coverage. Although the Munich Agreement was not mentioned specifically, Alfred Harris, the founding editor of the newspaper wrote: 'with the clearing of the war clouds and the hope of general appeasement in Europe, the Jewish debacle will be eased by the German authorities, returning to sanity for humanity's sake'.[120]

However, following the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Harris condemned Hitler's aggression.[121] It is fair to say that in contrast to other Australian newspapers, the situation of Jews in Czechoslovakia was completely ignored not only by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society but also by the *Hebrew Standard in Australasia*. Other Australian Jewish publications *Ivriah*, the *Australian Jewish Herald* and the *Australian Jewish News* likewise devoted most of their articles to the situation of Jews in Germany, Austria and Poland although they did report on the situation in Czechoslovakia. Interestingly, in view of the fact that the journalists were fully aware of Nazi atrocities and condemned the perpetrators, it is surprising that the *Australian Jewish Herald* published an article on 22 September 1938 praising Chamberlain's efforts to save peace. Further, on 24 October 1938 the newspaper alleged that Britain had to capitulate because it was not prepared for war.

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[118] Ibid. (13 October 1938).

[119] Ibid. (27 October 1938).

[120] *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (6 October 1938).

[121] *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (23 March 1938).

In Melbourne, both the *Australian Jewish Herald* and the *Australian Jewish News* expressed great concern over the fate of the Jewish population of Czechoslovakia. Articles were full of praise for Czechoslovakia's treatment of Jews in the past. The *Australian Jewish News* devoted a considerable amount of space to the increasingly desperate situation of Jews after the Munich Agreement was signed, the increase of antisemitism and the dangers Jews were exposed to after the German occupation of the rest of the country. Yet, what are missing are declarations of support for the beleaguered Jewish population from rabbis and leaders of the Australian Jewish community. Nor was there any appeal to the Commonwealth government to facilitate the admission of Czechoslovak Jews who wished to immigrate to Australia.

It is important to realize that religious organizations in Australia and their press were mainly concerned with ecclesiastical matters and that political issues were not of primary concern. Nevertheless, the indifference on the part of the Catholic clergy and the mixed reactions of the Protestant ministry demonstrate a 'hands off' approach from the Catholic camp, while on the Protestant side there is at least an awareness of the evil of Nazism.[122] The Jewish community, primarily concerned with the precarious situation of German, Austrian and Polish Jews, did not turn its attention to the remaining Jewish population in the Sudetenland, the Jewish asylum seekers from Germany and Austria in Czecho-Slovakia, nor indeed the threat to which the entire Jewish community of Czecho-Slovakia was exposed.[123]

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[122] The most prominent minister who voiced his condemnation of Nazism and the regime's treatment of Jews was Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher. See Maurice Laserson, *Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher: Biographical Study* (Sydney: Maurice Laserson, 1949).

The response to the Czechoslovak crisis by individuals, as well as political and non-governmental organizations was mixed and opinions on the outcome of the Munich Agreement were divided. It was not only concern about the possible outbreak of war that was on people's minds, it was attitudes towards the rights of a small European nation to defend its existence that were brought into question. As far as the Australian public was concerned, the complexity of European politics, as well as the stance towards Czechoslovakia taken by the Commonwealth government, the Opposition, individual members of the Federal Parliament, British statesmen and the Australian press were all important factors in presenting an often distorted picture of events.

By 1938 most Australians owned a wireless set. For those living in the outback, the radio was often the only source of information about world events. When examining media coverage of world events, it becomes obvious that there were inconsistencies in providing the Australian population with news. This is understandable, given the geographical isolation of Australia and the vastness of the sparsely populated continent. News bulletins presented by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) were in line with reports published by the Australian Associated Press.[124]

While in theory the press in Australia was not affected by government censorship, in contrast to editorial policies, news items that contradicted Australia's official position on foreign affairs were subject to censorship by the management of the ABC. Senator Sir John Keane first questioned the issue of censorship and news ownership in the Senate on 27 September 1938, when he demanded to know from the Postmaster General whether it was true that permission to broadcast certain news flashes on the European crisis was withdrawn in Australia. Senator Alexander John McLachlan answered that the BBC was available for broadcasting in Australia but there was a supplementary service supplied by Reuters.[125] Not satisfied with Senator McLachlan's explanation, Senator Keane raised the matter again on 6 October, criticizing Keith Murdoch for interfering with radio news broadcasts 'in order to keep the sale of his newspapers up'.[126] On 30 November 1938 Senator Keane raised the issue once again, pointing out that *Radio Times* published a statement according to which 'permission to re-broadcast overseas news in the Commonwealth of Australia was withdrawn following requests received by us from Reuters which were made to them by press interests here'. Notwithstanding the censorship, the ABC, apart from broadcasting regular news bulletins, also engaged commentators, academics or recent visitors to foreign countries to give professional assessments and report on current affairs.[127] Material available in the National Archives of Australia on radio broadcasts in 1938 is scarce. Neither does the ABC possess records of broadcasts made during that period. Yet, it is possible to appraise the nature of communications by studying transcripts of programmes, in which foreign affairs experts, academics and commentators were invited to express their views.

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[123] Following the Munich Agreement and until the occupation by Germany in March 1939 Czechoslvakia became known as Second Republic of Czecho-Slovakia ('Czecho-Slovakia').

[124] McMahon-Ball. *Press, Radio and World Affairs*, 128.

Two weeks after the annexation of Austria, on 24 March 1938, the ABC World Affairs programme invited Sir Malcolm Robertson, a veteran British diplomat to present his views on recent political developments in Europe. Robertson gave a precise appraisal of Hitler's strategies and considered the destruction of Austria's independence as the initial phase on the march across the continent. He took the opportunity to express concern about Czechoslovakia's future, which he saw threatened by Hitler's declarations to unite all ethnic Germans wherever they resided. Importantly, Robertson correctly predicted a crisis in Czechoslovakia, during the course of which the powers would either rally behind that country or abandon it to its fate in the interests of averting a far-reaching conflict.[128]

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[125] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, Senate, 27 September 1938, 193.

[126] Ibid. 448.

[127] Of interest are activities of Eric Baume, an Australian Jewish journalist and radio broadcaster who worked for the *Sunday Sun* and the 2GB radio station. Associated Newspapers censored Baume with regard to his criticism of German policies, which he published in the *Sunday Sun*. Baume did not hesitate to broadcast material critical of appeasement. This was not to the liking of Dr Asmis, the German Consul-General in Sydney, whose connections with 'some very influential people' eventually forced Baume off the air. See Arthur Manning, *Larger than Life: The Story of Eric Baume* (Sydney: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1967), 66.

If anybody was interested in listening to the history of the Kingdom of Bohemia and Czechoslovakia, they could have tuned in to ABC's World Affairs, which was linked to the programme *London Calling* on Thursday 26 May 1938. A detailed description of the situation in the wake of the so-called 'May Scare' was presented by Henry Wickham Steed, a British historian and journalist, who was an expert on East European Affairs and a friend of Presidents Masaryk and Beneš. Opposed to Hitler, Wickham Steed commented that Germany would step back from the brink of war, maintaining that the states of Central and Eastern Europe would unite in opposing his plans.[129] Although the presentation of Czechoslovakia's history, as related by Wickham Steed, would have acquainted the Australian listener with facts about Czechoslovakia, his insight into the core of the problem did not equal Robertson's who was more precise in the estimate of future developments.

As the crisis deepened, the person to listen to on the ABC was Edward Alexander Mann, whose nom de plume was 'The Watchman'. The very popular commentator took a strong stance in his commentaries on world affairs against Hitler's first advances beyond Germany in March 1938 and his threats against Czechoslovakia. The following month the ABC censor restricted him.[130] Unfortunately all transcripts of his radio broadcasts have been destroyed. What remains are Mann's discourses on appeasement, the Munich Agreement, his condemnation of Britain and France for their betrayal of Czechoslovakia and Hitler's aggression which appeared in *Arrows in the Air: A Selection from Broadcasts by the Watchman*, published by S. John Bacon in Melbourne, probably in 1944. In it Mann summarized his commentaries on the Versailles Treaty, on Germany's goals and the implications of the Munich Agreement worldwide, including its impact on Australia, which were aired on the ABC. His words were arousing and prophetic, when he declared in *Facing the Facts*:

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[128] NAA SP369/2, 'Talk scripts – Australian Broadcasting Corporation', news commentaries, discussions on international affairs, 'Notes on the News' and 'News Review', Item 9683791. Talk by Sir Malcolm Robertson.

[129] Ibid. Talk by H. Wickham Stead. It is interesting that Alfred Stirling mentioned Wickham Steed in his file of letters to Colonel Hodgson, dated 7 October 1938. NAA AA1972/341, 95, 'Copies of Letters Nos 86 (dated 7 October 1938), 87 (dated 12 October 1938) and 88 (dated 14 October 1938) from Alfred Stirling, External Affairs Liaison Officer in London to Secretary Hodgson of Department of External Affairs, Canberra reporting on reaction in Britain to the Munich Agreement including the debate in British Parliament', Item 214739. Wickham Steed held strong antisemitic views, blaming the Jews for all the evils in the world, including responsibility for causing the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution, which according to him was based on his belief in the veracity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. See Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 32, 195.

> The crisis, supposed to be *ended* by Munich, is only the beginning, but I am not, I am sorry to say, concerned with its effect on England. They will have to face it for themselves. But so inevitably must we for ourselves.[131]

The Watchman had many opponents who took offence at what he had to say. A reader of *The Age* sent a letter to the editor, entitled 'Watchman versus Chamberlain', expressing his revulsion over the Watchman's defence of Czechoslovakia and his derogatory views of Chamberlain. The author was critical of the ABC for giving the Watchman air space in which to broadcast his views.[132]

Perhaps the most compelling of all broadcasts were those of William McMahon-Ball, a journalist and Melbourne University academic.[133] It is interesting to follow the evolution of McMahon-Ball's understanding of the

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[130] NAA SP286/6, 'News Commentaries and Commentators file The Watchman', Item 316614. Letter from A. M. Smith, Memorandum to the General Manager, 18 March 1938; letter from M. F. Dixon, Federal News Editor to the General Manager, 22 April 1938.

[131] Edward Alexander Mann, *Arrows in the Air: A Selection from Broadcasts by the Watchman* (Melbourne: E. A. Mann, S. J. Bacon, 1944?), broadcast on 25 October 1938.

[132] 'Watchman v. Chamberlain', *The Age* (5 October 1938).

[133] NAA SP369/2, 'Talk scripts – Australian Broadcasting Corporation', news commentaries, discussions on international affairs, 'Notes on the News' and 'News Review',

Czechoslovak problem. On 19 May 1938, *The Age* published an article titled 'Appeasing Germany, Are Hitler's Ambitions Limitless'? It was a report on McMahon-Ball's address to an audience at the University of Melbourne, in which he expressed the conviction that 'Chamberlain's policy of appeasement to be wiser [...] at a considerable risk, given Hitler's intentions'.

Four and a half months later he presented an account of the consequences of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement to radio listeners in Australia. Alternating between five and ten minute talks on the ABC, McMahon-Ball's reports were about his experience of life in Germany and Czecho-Slovakia, as he witnessed it following the signing of the Munich Agreement. The talks spanned the period from 3 October to 9 December 1938. While there was no shortage of articles on the aftermath of the conference in Munich in the Australian press, no amount of printed publications can equal McMahon-Ball's personal experiences, as he travelled through Belgium to Germany, visited towns and villages close to the Czech border and then made the crossing into the country that had just lost its border regions to Germany. His description of impressions gained through his passage into Hitler's territory and newly gained domains in Bohemia are unique and revealing.

McMahon-Ball set out for the Continent on the spur of the moment, to the consternation of the ticket vendor at Victoria Station in London. The account of the trip through Belgium is remarkable as he reports on conversations with Belgian troops with whom he shared a compartment. If Britain and the Dominions were breathing a sigh of relief, notes McMahon-Ball, then the Belgians were acutely aware that the agreement reached in Munich was only a prelude to war, which they considered inevitable. Having crossed into Germany, McMahon-Ball comments on the calm atmosphere there, the Germans' ignorance of the international tension, their incredulity when learning of English fears of a German attack and their hopes that Germany and Britain 'will become friends'. Surprisingly, McMahon-Ball notes, there was no jubilation over the fact that Britain was on the losing side under the Agreement. Instead, there was great sympathy for Chamberlain who, in the

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Item 9683791. W. McMahon-Ball, 'Letters from Overseas', October–December 1938 (To the ABC).

opinion of the Germans McMahon-Ball interviewed, was wise enough to see the irrational tactics of France and Russia and did his best to bring the crisis to a successful end. Nevertheless, it was Hitler whom they praised for bringing peace to the world, not Chamberlain, nor Beneš.

McMahon-Ball's journey was an odyssey in every sense of the word. By introducing the views of the Belgian soldiers, he makes it clear to the Australian listener that the threat of war had not subsided. A country neighbouring Germany, Belgium was near the epicentre of Nazidom, with an acute awareness of what Europe was about to face. Relating the premonition of the Belgian soldiers, McMahon-Ball then leads listeners to the same conclusion by gradually changing their perceptions of the present reality. Aware that there were many people in Australia at the time who supported the Sudeten Germans, who likewise derided the Czechs and admired the British for holding out an olive branch to the dictator, McMahon-Ball appears determined to demonstrate to them what the sell-out of Czechoslovakia to Hitler implied.

He relates this view in a broadcast on 3 October 1938 at the beginning of a trip to the Sudetenland. Martial law was then in force throughout the region, a special permit had to be obtained from the Gestapo at Plauen, and rigorous identity checks were carried out. According to McMahon-Ball, weary Sudeten Germans, who had fled Czechoslovakia, were now returning home. In a report of 5 October 1938, entitled 'Moving with the Frontier', McMahon-Ball describes his visit to Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad). He reports that the atmosphere at the famous spa was festive, people mingled with German soldiers and everybody was awaiting Hitler's arrival. At the same time, however, McMahon-Ball draws his listeners' attention to the reality that there were also people who were distraught: Jews, Czechs and socialists whom he saw crowding the platform of a railway station, carrying their meagre possessions, hoping to reach safety as soon as possible. While others were returning these people were vacating the area, making way for German settlers. Adding to the warlike atmosphere he describes the troops in full military gear, with the Luftwaffe flying low above their heads.

McMahon-Ball and his companion were interested in crossing the border but the Germans tried to dissuade them because, they alleged, the Czechs would shoot them the moment they set their feet there. That was

Nazi propaganda. It never happened. They were instead offered a lift in a car to Prague. Having crossed the new frontier, pushed back into the interior of what used to be free Czechoslovakia, McMahon-Ball notes that he was immediately struck by the change of atmosphere: from an exuberant mood on the German/Sudetenland side to one of despair, betrayal and defeat on the Czech side.

This is perhaps best conveyed in a talk on 16 October 1938 in which he tells listeners that transport routes on the Czech side were blocked, making it almost impossible for him to travel further. He relates the despondency of two Czech railwaymen who had just lost their livelihood, sitting in a pub, aware that within 24 hours they would come under German domination. Exceptionally vivid is his description of a Sudeten German officer serving in the Czechoslovak army, bowing his head to a Czech private who entered the pub, and then, upon reaching the new German border, triumphantly raising his arm, shouting 'Heil Hitler'! The officer handed his Czech uniform epaulettes and buttons to the German border guards as a memento of the occasion and as proof of his transformation into a loyal German citizen.

The ABC aired McMahon-Ball's following broadcast on 17 October 1938. In this broadcast he draws the Australian citizen's attention to the reality of Nazi power. Finally, aware of the fallacy of the policy of appeasement, McMahon-Ball recounts an encounter with British, French and United States foreign correspondents who were at that point in time the only Western representatives in Prague. They had all witnessed the fall of democracy and he reports that they felt nothing but shame for what their governments had done to their host nation. The foreign correspondents gathered in the lobby of the Ambassador Hotel in the centre of Prague, contemplated 'how best to adapt ourselves to the new Dark Age descending upon Western civilisation'.[134] McMahon-Ball then describes to Australian listeners how he saw 'trains disgorging their loads of penniless, bewildered, half-starving refugees at the Masaryk railway station and heard reliable reports that the Germans among them would soon be driven back into

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[134] Ibid. (Broadcast from 17 October 1938).

Hitler's Sudetenland'. To which he adds: 'I felt that I was watching one of the great revolting indecencies of history'. He concludes the broadcast by saying that he feels relief at the thought that he is leaving Prague the next morning: 'It was not pleasant to watch a nation die'.[135]

Back in London on 24 October 1938, McMahon-Ball notes the self-confidence of the revelling Germans, the solemn atmosphere in Cologne Cathedral and the march of history, making its impact on humankind. He explains what the Germans claim to want in his broadcast on 29 October – friendship with Britain, their understanding that justice was done when Germany settled its affairs with Austria and Czechoslovakia, and importantly, their dissatisfaction with foreign criticism of Germany's treatment of Jews, which after all, in their opinion, 'was their affair'.[136]

McMahon-Ball's most poignant broadcast took place on 10 November 1938. It was entitled 'The Munich Agreement and Czechoslovakia'. In it he declares that although Poland and Hungary were still demanding their slice of Czechoslovakia, it is now clear that the Munich Agreement has left the country in ruins – strategically, demographically, economically and politically.[137] His broadcast coincided with the first reports appearing in the media of the Kristallnacht pogrom, which was taking place in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland against the Jewish population. McMahon-Ball's concluding words that 'between the Rhine and Russia, Hitler's word is law', are a correct assessment of the impact of the Munich Agreement, the consequences of which he personally witnessed and submitted to Australia for consideration.[138]

McMahon-Ball and the editor of the *SMH* provided Australian listeners and readers with accurate evaluations of Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia. One week after McMahon-Ball's ominous words were broadcast on the ABC, the *SMH* reproduced an article from *The Times*, in which Sir Evelyn Wrench, the founder of the Overseas League commented on:

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[135] Ibid. (Broadcast from 17 October 1938).

[136] Ibid. (Broadcast from 29 October 1938).

[137] Ibid. (Broadcast from 10 November 1938).

[138] Ibid.

> […] the establishment of a voluntary committee representative of the Dominions and the colonies to survey the Empire's absorptive capacity for Jewish refugees. (He urged) a three-year plan, classifying all Jews absorbable in each section. Many thousands of young men of the right kind could surely be absorbed in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and sections of the colonial Empire, which are crying out for development.[139]

For Czecho-Slovakia's threatened Jewish population, together with German and Austrian exiles and Sudeten German opponents to Nazism, this proposal offered a life-saving opportunity.

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[139] 'Approach to Nazis Committee for Refugee Immigration – Talks urged', *SMH* (17 November 1938).

CHAPTER 5

The Aftermath of the Munich Agreement

> The tragedy of this brave little nation has evoked the sympathy of all democratic countries, and it would be something of a salve to our collective conscience if we could hold out a practical helping hand to them in their great distress. With the wide open spaces of this great and free continent calling to be populated by the right kind of people, we in Australia should be particularly interested; and it would be a gracious gesture, as well as eliminating some of the shame that we feel in the realisation that we have gained peace only through their sacrifice, to make it easy for some of them to come to our land and start their lives afresh.[1]

The wide coverage that the Australian press gave to the situation in Czecho-Slovakia after the signing of the Munich Agreement reflects the anxiety felt in Australia with regard to uncertainty about Hitler's next move. There was also some sympathy for the Czechoslovak people, as indicated by the letter to the editor of the *SMH* quoted above. Despite the fact that the Munich Agreement was meant to bring a peaceful solution many readers saw Hitler's acquisition of parts of Czecho-Slovakia's territory as the first step towards absorbing the rest of the country into the German Reich. So too did George Martelli, the special correspondent of the *SMH* who claimed that the Germans were progressing 'from dismemberment and neutralization of Czechoslovakia to its complete destruction' in an effort to fulfil their expansionist ambitions.[2]

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[1] Letter to the editor by E. R. Bingham of Neutral Bay, NSW, *SMH* (15 October 1938).

[2] George Martelli, 'Nazi March Eastward, Czech Barrier Down, Hitler's Way Open', *SMH* (8 October 1938).

Martelli was reacting to a letter sent the previous day by Elsie Rankin, an Australian tourist who had just left Prague, shaken by the despair of the Czechs. The resentment of the Czech population over Hitler's assault on their homeland was also reported by Dr Richard G. Geeves, honorary surgeon at Hornsby Hospital in Sydney, who travelled with his friends to the Continent and arrived in Czechoslovakia at the peak of the crisis, driving a hired car. Upon noticing a German registration plate, somebody threw a rock onto the windscreen.[3]

In the aftermath of the Munich Agreement, the Australian media focused on a multitude of problems facing the country that had been destroyed without a shot being fired. President Beneš went into exile, first in the United States, then in the United Kingdom. Slovakia became an autonomous region and a new government, subservient to Germany, was installed. Czecho-Slovakia's infrastructure, its military power and its economy were obliterated. Moreover, antisemitism was still a major issue, supported by both the Czech and Slovak media, the Catholic Church and other apolitical and non-governmental organizations.[4] Thousands of dispossessed Sudeten refugees sought to escape into the dismembered country, which became known as the Second Republic of Czecho-Slovakia on 8 October 1938. As a result of the worsening situation, most Jews and Sudeten German opponents to Nazism were anxious to emigrate at the first opportunity.[5]

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[3] 'Czechoslovak bitterness – Experience of Sydney Doctor', *SMH* (14 October 1938). The *SMH* did not report the story correctly. Dr Geeves was touring Europe with his wife when they decided to visit Czecho-Slovakia. My gratitude goes to Dr Richard Geeves Jr, who related to me the story in December 2014.

[4] Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík, *Druhá Republika 1938–1939: Svár demokracie a totality v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě* (*The Second Republic 1938–1939: The clash between democracy and totalitarianism in the political, social and cultural life*) (Prague: Paseka, 2004), 92–122; Jaroslav Šebek, 'Projevy anitsemitismu v českém katolickém prostředí v polovině třicátých let a za druhé republiky v kontextu krize demokracie a nástupu autoritativních hnutí' (Manifestations of antisemitism in the Catholic milieu in Czechoslovakia in the mid-1930s and in the Second Republic in the context to the crisis of democracy and the rise of authoritarian movements), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina za druhé republiky* (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2007), 97–107.

[5] Peter Heumos, 'Mnichovská dohoda a počátky emigrace z Československa', 61–75.

The Aftershock: The Human Cost of Munich

Articles in the Australian press, including readers' letters to the editors, appealed to the Australian government to open its borders to refugees and provide financial assistance to Czecho-Slovakia.[6] One of the most compelling editorials was published in the *SMH* on 14 October, describing the plight of 'hapless refugees attempting to escape the tyranny of the Nazi regime … victims sacrificed upon the altar of European peace'. The editor forecast the prospect of things to come. He quoted Henlein, who declared that political opponents to the regime and refugees would be imprisoned, without mercy 'until they turned black'.[7]

Given the impact on British financial reserves, channelled towards the absorption of refugees from Germany, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, the cooperation of other European countries in sharing the burden was vital. However, their responses to Britain's appeals for assistance were not encouraging. Documents in the National Archives of Australia provide information on responses to the Czecho-Slovak refugee situation from several countries. Norway was in receipt of 400 applications for asylum but the authorities insisted that the refugees be relocated to the Dominions within six months, while the Danish government agreed although requesting a guarantee from the British that the refugees would eventually be admitted to Britain or the Dominions. The French government was inclined to approve the admission of 340 refugees, of which 300 were to be Sudeten Germans, yet, had not confirmed its decision. Finland had not undertaken to accept any, but was reported to be viewing the situation with sympathy.[8] The United States formed a committee under the direction of Dr Nicholas Butler, whose task was to raise funds for the relief of refugees, at the same time urging restraint on dealing with the refugee situation between the governments of Germany and Czecho-Slovakia.[9] The committee's representatives were working in Prague. However, as will be seen, there were also several American organizations involved in saving refugees. Under the circumstances it was not surprising that, given the extent of the refugee crisis, the British government turned to Australia, requesting assistance by approving applications for landing permits.

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[6] The Australian press took keen interest in events taking place in Czechoslovakia after the signing of the Munich Agreement between October and December 1938. The articles focused primarily on the refugee crisis. *The Argus*, for example, devoted articles to this issue on 5, 7, 11, 14, 21, 22 October and 3 December 1938. The *Canberra Times* on 10, 25, 26 October and 15 December 1938; *SMH* on 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 25, 27, 28 October, 2, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25 November, and 3, 5, 22 December 1938; and *The Age* on 7 October and 21 December 1938.

[7] Quoted by Sir Archibald Sinclair, 1 November 1938, *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, 5th series, vol. 340 (1938), 63–182.

As had been the case during the crisis preceding the Munich conference, the Australian government was in receipt of regular reports on the situation in post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia from the Secretary for Dominions Affairs. Assessments on the impact of the refugee crisis were communicated by Robert Stopford, the Duke of Devonshire, Sir Harry Twyford (former Lord Mayor of London), Stanley Bruce, acting High Commissioner John S. Duncan, V. C. Duffy, the Official Secretary of the Australian High Commission, Joseph Carrodus, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Alfred Stirling.[10] The information was based on reports sent to the Foreign Office by Basil Newton, David Grenfell (Labour Member for Gower) and William Gillies, the Head of the International Department of the British Labour Party.[11]

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[8] NAA A981, REF 8, 'Refugees – General from Czechoslovakia', Item 180502. Letter from the Acting Australian High Commissioner J. S. Duncan to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, 30 November 1938. See also Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 36–37.

[9] On the activities of Dr Butler see NAA A461, P420/1, 'Assistance to Czechoslovakia', Item 97424. Appendix to the letter from the Duke of Devonshire to Bruce, 14 October 1938.

[10] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

[11] Ursula Langkau-Alex, 'International Socialist Labour Movement and the Elimination of the German Problem', research paper published by the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Gescheidenis (Amsterdam, 1997). Available at <http://www.iisg.nl/publications/respap29.pdf>.

Following the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany, the British government provided the new government of Czecho-Slovakia with a loan of £10 million for the purpose of rebuilding the economy and the absorption of thousands of people who had fled from territories ceded to Germany. Of this amount, £4 million was allocated as a gift to those who needed to leave the country.[12] In his letter to Bruce, Devonshire informed the High Commissioners that Stopford's task was to oversee the dispersal of funds, provided that assurances of non- discrimination on political and/or racial grounds would be given by the Czecho-Slovak government.[13] The conditions of the loan also stipulated that the Czecho-Slovak government co-operate with various refugee organizations, initiate programmes aimed at organizing the resettlement of refugees and provide information on the number of Czech, German and Jewish refugees. Optants were excluded from the programme.[14] Importantly, Devonshire was interested to know whether Bruce had already received an indication on the Australian government's attitude towards the admission of refugees.

The letter from the Duke informed Bruce that Stopford was instructed to send an estimate of numbers and types of refugees who desired to emigrate and report whether the Czecho-Slovak government agreed to permit the refugees to transfer a moderate amount of their capital. Most significantly, Stopford was to assess whether Sudeten German social democrats were suitable immigrants. As the Duke pointed out to Bruce, their situation called for urgent action, given that their return to the Sudetenland was a contentious issue between the German and Czecho-Slovak governments.[15]

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[12] Jan Kuklík, *Do poslední pence* (*Until the Last Penny*) (Prague: Karolinum, 2007), 13–57.

[13] Louise London, W*hitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146; A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge, Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich* (London: Elek, 1973), 145–147; and Kuklík, *Do poslední pence*, 44.

[14] Non-Jewish Czech inhabitants of the Sudetenland were designated as optants. They could opt to remain or to leave the region.

[15] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. Letter from the Duke of Devonshire to High Commissioner Bruce, 1 November 1938. NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158,

Stirling supplied the Australian government with detailed reports on the implementation of the Munich Agreement, its impact on Czecho-Slovakia and the effect on other European countries. The refugee crisis was briefly mentioned in his communications in 1938 in conjunction with decisions taken by the Dominions Office but increased in frequency in 1939, when the issue of immigration came to the fore.[16]

Britain was hoping to persuade Australian authorities to issue landing permits to the refugees. However, it was the plight of non-Jewish Sudeten German social democrats that was of concern to Devonshire. He highlighted their situation to Bruce, as well as to Vincent Massey (High Commissioner of Canada) and William Jordan (High Commissioner of New Zealand), requesting them to appeal to their governments for assistance. Although Devonshire was of the opinion that the Dominions should admit Sudeten German refugees, their leader, Wenzel Jaksch, was pessimistic because of unemployment issues. The Foreign Office declared one week after its deliberations on the situation, which took place on 5 and 6 October 1938, that the Dominions were concerned about unemployment in their respective countries.[17]

Jaksch's report on the situation of Sudeten German opponents to Nazism was first sent to Stopford and then to Australia.[18] The report was an important source of information which prompted the Duke of Devonshire to contact Bruce. It was aimed at acquainting the Australian government with the situation in post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia on the one hand and on the other, to endorse the admission of skilled migrants to Australia. Letters forwarded by Stirling, Duncan and E. G. Machtig[19] from the Office of the Secretary for Dominions Affairs drew attention to the extreme danger to

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'Podpora vystěhovalectví, vývoz valut, všeobecně'; and NAA A981, League REFU 8, Part 2, 'League of Nations Refugees High Commissioner For Refugees Part II', Item 178533. Report on the situation of refugees from territories ceded by Czechoslovakia to Germany, undated.

[16] NAA A461, P420/1, 'Assistance to Czechoslovakia', Item 97424. Letter from Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 28 October 1938.

[17] Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 31.

[18] NAA A981, REF 8, 'Refugees – General from Czechoslovakia', Item 180502.

[19] E. G. Machtig was the Assistant Under-Secretary of the Office for Dominions Affairs.

which the Sudeten German social democrats were exposed to if deported to Germany and their struggle to survive in refugee camps in the midst of a hostile Czech population.[20]

The supplement, 'German Social Democrat Refugees from the Sudeten Area', sent by Devonshire to Bruce on 29 November 1938, describes the situation as acute. At the same time he acknowledges that the Czech government, overwhelmed by the refugee crisis, was keen on disengaging itself from Sudeten German refugees, not in the least because it was concerned that a new minority problem could arise. In order to avoid further hardships for non-Jewish Sudeten German social democrats, the British ambassador to Germany, Henderson, and Sir Neill Malcolm, the High Commissioner for Refugees, were engaged in consultations with both the German and the Czech governments 'to allow the refugees to remain for two months' during which time Malcolm 'would undertake arrangements for their maintenance, leading towards their absorption in other countries'.[21] This request was in line with the appeal made by Jaksch.[22] Assurances given by the German government that the fate of the Sudeten German social democrats was of no concern, were not acceptable to the National Council of the Labour Party in their representations to the British government. In their opinion, these refugees were in imminent danger.[23] Of significance is a letter sent by the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs in which he appears keen to inform the Commonwealth government that it is necessary to explain the position of Britain and the Dominions with regard to the Czechoslovak fiasco.[24]

Furthermore Duncan, as official Secretary of the Australian High Commission, attached a lengthy memorandum where he 'summarized recent information and developments from the Private Secretary of the

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[20] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

[21] Ibid. Statement 'German Social Democrat Refugees from Sudeten Areas', undated.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid. Confidential report sent to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department in Canberra, 21 October 1938.

[24] NAA A981, REF 8, 'Refugees – General from Czechoslovakia', Item 180502. Letter to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department by V. C. Duffy, 1 November 1938.

Duke of Devonshire'. The report, based on Stopford's, deals, amongst other issues, with the situation of Jews in the Sudetenland and in Czecho-Slovakia:

> (e) Jews
> In addition to the problem of the 15–20,000 Jews (Sudeten and Old Reich) referred to above, Stopford thinks it almost certain that the problem of Czech Jews will shortly arise on a very large scale. The present Foreign Minister, Dr Chvalkovský is said to have stated to a 'reliable informant' that the whole question of all the Jews in Czechoslovakia would have to be dealt with and that he hoped that before January all the Jews in the country would have decided that they must emigrate. Stopford states that there is no doubt that the feeling is extremely antisemitic and that the possibility of a wholesale expulsion Jews (numbering between 150,000–250,000) must be faced.[25]

While Stopford refers to Jews residing in the area that was annexed to Germany in his report, the fact was that they were all Czechoslovak citizens and many more lived in both the Czech Lands and in Slovakia. It goes without saying that their lives were in danger, taking into account the escalation of antisemitism in the media since the establishment of the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic.

There were other reports dispatched to Australia in November 1938. On 23 November, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care in Prague sent a lengthy report 'concerning the emigration of refugees' which was received in Australia.[26] The report describes the situation of the refugees – by 15 November the number of refugees had reached 100,000 and was increasing daily. Given that these people had lost all their possessions and that there were at present 100,000 Czechs who were unemployed (excluding the refugees), the Ministry supported the refugees in their efforts to emigrate. They were to be divided into groups: refugees from Germany, Austria and Hungary (about 4,000 people without means of sustenance); refugees from ceded territories – approximately 6,000 Germans, mostly workers without fortune [*sic*]; 50,000 Czecho-Slovaks and Subcarpatho-Ukrainians

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[25] Ibid. 8.

[26] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

(Ruthenians); and thousands of Jews who were eager to emigrate. The Ministry 'was anxious to obtain from the countries of immigration their consent to accept our emigrants'.[27]

The report provides a list of countries expressing their willingness to accept them including the Dominican Republic (democratic Germans), Britain and Sweden (democratic Germans). The quota for emigration to the United States had already been fully exhausted by the influx of German Jews. The same excuse was given with regard to obtaining permission to immigrate to Palestine. Considerable attention was given to Canada's willingness to populate its vast areas with agricultural workers. In addition, France appeared interested in settling Czechoslovak refugees in French colonies. The report also raises the question of whether it was possible for Australia and New Zealand to accept refugees. Significantly, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care requested the inclusion of Slovak Jews into the emigration process. In fact, there were actually more Slovak Jews than had been estimated at first.

By this time international organizations and Australian non-governmental organizations were also appealing to the Australian government to make its position on the admission of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia known and/or to provide financial assistance for the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure.

Appeals for Admission of Czecho-Slovak Refugees Worldwide

Although the report of the Institute for the Care of Refugees in Prague was released on 22 November 1938, the standing orders of the Institute were only introduced on 8 February 1939. The main tasks of the Institute were to assist

[27] Ibid.

refugees, organize emigration and secure financing.[28] Negotiations were initiated with South American governments, with European colonial administrations in Africa, with Canada, Australia and New Zealand.[29] Countries offering to admit Czechoslovak refugees were Rhodesia, Ecuador and Uruguay (both Aryans and non-Aryans). Argentina and Brazil expressed interest in admitting skilled refugees, but were not interested in admitting Jews.[30] On the other hand the Dominican Republic was interested in absorbing Jewish refugees and offered generous support towards their settlement. Even more interesting was the offer extended by the government of Afghanistan. According to the director of the Bank of Afghanistan, the Afghan government was interested in offering employment to twenty medical practitioners for a projected construction of a hospital, in addition to acquiring specialists in the leather and food-canning industries.[31] Italy was keen on taking in 8,000 to 10,000 new Czech colonists to settle in Abyssinia and other Italian overseas territories. Apart from Brazil and Argentina, there were other countries that were not willing to accept Jewish immigrants. Paraguay was interested in Aryans only. Similarly, Chile was keen on admitting skilled tradespeople and agricultural workers, provided that they were Roman Catholics. The Belgians were interested in accepting builders, medical practitioners and military personnel to be engaged in the development of their projects in the Congo. As far as New Zealand was concerned, it was reported that application forms for admission of Czechoslovak refugees were available.[32]

Notwithstanding the urgency of the situation, the search for countries willing to accept the refugees, in particular Jewish refugees, as well as the ability to reach these countries, was wrought with difficulty. For example, pregnant women were not allowed to leave unless their husbands were already settled abroad or overseas.[33] However, as a result of the British government donation of £4 million,[34] there were indeed opportunities for a selected number of refugees to emigrate. The Institute for the Care of Refugees was able to announce that a representative from Australia would be arriving sometime in the future to assess the suitability of refugees for resettlement in Australia.[35] Nevertheless, Heumos, in his study on the availability of immigration visas to the Dominions, writes: 'the Dominions were only interested in Germans, not in Jews, nor Czechs'. Heumos, therefore, deduces that Jewish refugees were the least desired.[36] Louise London is in agreement with Heumos on this issue, noting:

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[28] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, 'Podpora vystěhovalectví, vývoz valut, všeobecně'.

[29] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a repatriace, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 161, 'Vystěhovalectví, IV. Schůze vystěhovaleckého odboru, 8. února 1939'.

[30] AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 526, 'Emigrace – Evakuace'.

[31] Report of Dr Šmolková on negotiations in London, 5 February 1939. JOINT Archives 535_1_1939.

[32] Ibid. Report of 8 March 1939. See also Report of the Jewish Community of Prague to the American Joint Distribution Committee, 1 August 1939. JOINT Archives 535_1_1939.

> […] discrimination [against Jews] was based on the principle of opposing mass Jewish emigration from Czechoslovakia. The Home Office and British refugee organizations held to this principle and used it to justify withholding funds which could have enabled more people to escape.[37]

For Jews who were Czechoslovak citizens and were not former residents of the occupied areas, the situation was different. Given that the Institute for the Care of Refugees was not charged with looking after their interests, they were compelled to act on their own. The number of Jews who were interested in leaving the country increased considerably after 30 September 1938. Emigration was the only alternative to the endurance of restrictions and hostility, aimed at marginalizing Jews. Apart from the difficult decision to leave family members behind, the decision to emigrate was beset with problems: overcoming countless bureaucratic requirements,[38] obtaining visas (transit and immigration), certificates on settlement of taxation obligations, and securing means for financing overseas journeys.[39] The Institute was informed that a letter was forwarded to the Živnostenská, Anglo-Czechoslovak and Prague Credit Banks that arrangements had been made with shipping, railway and airline companies to cover travel expenses and to provide funds[40] for maintenance in countries to which the refugee would immigrate. Moreover, medical certificates of good health and police certificates of good character were required.[41]

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[33] Report of Dr Šmolková on negotiations in London, 8 February 1939. JOINT Archives 535_1_1939.

[34] Jana Kuklík and Jana Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund, a československá emigrace, Část 1, Geneze a finanční zabezpečení', *Soudobé dějiny* 14/1 (2007), 9–43.

[35] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a repatriace, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 161, Report of 8 February 1939.

[36] Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 3. Citing NA UK, HO 371/21585, C 13106/1. See also Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část 1', 13 and 18.

[37] London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948*, 142. Both Maxwell of the Home Office, Sir Herbert Emerson and Sir Henry Bunbury, according to London, 'were interested in keeping Jewish emigration within strict limits', a policy opposed by Stopford who was committed to saving Jews (158).

Prosperous migrants were permitted to transfer a certain amount of their capital and various rates of exchange were set depending on sums to be transferred.[42] For example, people wanting to transfer 10,000 Czech crowns (Kč) would be able to exchange the sum at the official rate of 140 Kč to £1; amounts between 10,000 to 50,000 Kč at 30 per cent premium and amounts between 50,000 and 100,000 Kč at 50 per cent premium. Amounts higher than 100,000 Kč could not be transferred, but refugees in possession of shares were able to transfer interest from their investments at an official rate.[43] Refugees who lacked funds were entitled to receive £200 to cover their emigration expenditure.[44]

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[38] Bohumil Černý, 'Emigrace Židú z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941' (Emigration of Jews from the Czech Lands), *Terezínské Studie a Dokumenty* (1997), 51–71.

[39] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a repatriace, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 161, 'Travel expenses for refugees', 352 R423.

[40] Ibid.

[41] NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5000, 'Cestovní pasy, průkaz o zaplacení daní', MV SR 441, D-1206.

[42] Hana Velecká, 'Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace do vypuknutí války v roce 1939' (British assistance to refugees from Czechoslovakia since occupation to the outbreak of the war in 1939), *Soudobé dějiny* 8/4 (2001), 664.

[43] NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a sociální péče, 1146, MPSP-R, Karton 160. NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, R 422 – 'Ústav pro péči o uprhclíky při mnisterstvu sociální a zdravotní správy'.

[44] NAA A981, REF 8, 'Refugees – General from Czechoslovakia', Item 180502. Report from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care, Prague, Emigration of Refugees (22 November 1938).

International Refugee Organizations

As can be seen, prospective Jewish migrants, residents of Czecho-Slovakia, as well as German and Austrian refugees who had previously found asylum in Czechoslovakia were all in urgent need of expert assistance to secure permits to enter foreign countries, as well as a seat on a train, on an airplane or a berth on a ship. A number of organizations were set up to provide support: The Jewish Agency and Maccabi-Hehalutz in Palestine, the Dutch Comité Voor Joodsche Vluchteligen, the Belgian Comité d'Assistance aux Refugiés Juifs, as well as the British Quaker organization (The Society of Friends).[45] Furthermore, there were four major organizations that were committed to help refugees from Czecho-Slovakia: The American Joint Distribution Committee, the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HICEM), and, as will be seen, from mid-1939, the Czech Refugee Trust Fund (CRTF).

The American Joint Distribution Committee, known as JOINT, played a significant role in aiding Czecho-Slovak Jews, through its headquarters in New York and its European Executive Council in Paris under the direction of Maurice C. Troper. Since the annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938 and throughout 1939, the organization kept in contact with the Institute for the Care of Refugees, publishing statistics, detailed reports on developments affecting lives of Jews and efforts made to assist them.[46] The organization provided an in-depth assessment on the disastrous situation, in which Jews of the Sudetenland, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia found themselves. Special attention was drawn to the situation of Slovak Jews in the wake of pogroms that erupted, following the establishment of the 'independent' Slovak State on 14 March 1939.[47]

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[45] Bohumil Černý, 'Emigrace Židů z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941' (Emigration of Jews from the Czech lands during 1938–1941), *Terezínské Studie a Dokumenty* (1997), 55–71 and Velecká, 'Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace do vypuknutí válkyv roce 1939', 659.

[46] JOINT Archives 535_1_1939. Letter from Maurice J. Troper, 26 December 1938.

JOINT's activities were widespread and were aimed at supporting the beleaguered community, solving social issues, organizing training sessions for prospective emigrants and networks of refugee activists in Czecho-Slovakia.[48] Funding for Jewish communities became contentious. In a letter dated 16 June 1939 to Alfred Benesch in Cleveland Ohio, the Executive Director stated that JOINT had distributed funds for Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia, yet, at present, it was necessary 'to await the establishment of a local instrumentality through which it can work and which is in a position to assume the necessary responsibility therewith'.[49] Evelyn M. Morrissey, in her memorandum of the same date included a message from Troper, according to which the JOINT made a decision that foreign currency should not be sent to countries under fascist rule, which included the Protectorate and Slovakia. Morrissey, however, concluded that 'we shall have to give consideration to a policy with respect to remittances of our funds into Czechoslovakia'.[50] JOINT's principal task was to find countries that would admit refugees. Except for Canada, immigration to Dominions did not warrant mention in the report. Immigration to Palestine and to the Dominican Republic received the organization's support. JOINT collaborated with their colleagues in Britain in exchanging information on every aspect of the refugee crisis, coordinating efforts to alleviate the plight of the refugees.[51]

In addition, organizations devoted to helping Czechoslovak refugees to enter the United States were also established. One of the North American organizations involved with saving Czechoslovak refugees was the American

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[47] Ibid. 'Report on the Situation of Jews in Slovakia', undated. See also Draft Memorandum, Slovakia (8 June 1939).

[48] JOINT Archives 535_1_1939, Memorandum from J. C. Hyman to the Officers of the JDC (3 March 1939).

[49] Ibid. Letter from the Executive Director to Alfred Benesch, 16 June 1939.

[50] Ibid. Letter from Evelyn E. Morrisey, 16 June, 1939.

[51] JOINT Archives 535_1_1939. Letter from Maurice C. Troper to JOINT Headquarters in New York, 17 February 1939, regarding negotiations of Marie Šmolková with Mary Ormerod and Norman Bentwich in London.

Committee for Relief in Czechoslovakia which was collaborating with the Czechoslovak Consul in Pittsburgh, Dr Jan Papánek. The organization's goal was to provide financial help to refugees and to involve other organizations, such as the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, the American Red Cross and the American Unitarian Association. Czechoslovak migrant organizations together with many prominent United States citizens were committed to raising awareness of the sacrifice that the people of Czecho-Slovakia were forced to make in order to save world peace. These establishments devoted their efforts to informing the United States public on developments in Czecho-Slovakia, on antisemitic policies aimed at enforcing the expulsion of Jews, as well as organizing fundraising drives in major North American cities and assisting in finding new homes for Czecho-Slovak refugees.[52]

Nevertheless, Britain's efforts to help Jewish and Sudeten German refugees were pivotal.[53] The British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC), was, according to the Home Office, 'to assume responsibility for caring for refugees from Czecho-Slovakia reaching this country'.[54] However, given the flood of applications for residency in Britain and the Dominions, criteria had to be established according to which a person would classify as a refugee. Classifications included: Germans and Austrians who had previously found asylum in Czechoslovakia and were now stateless; refugees of German nationality who were Czechoslovak subjects but could not return to their homes; Jews from areas ceded to Germany who could not opt for Czecho-Slovak citizenship; and Jews who fled from Slovakia to the Czech Lands.[55]

One of the main tasks of the BCRC was to supervise the liaison with banking institutions in Britain and Czecho-Slovakia (later the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) and coordinate transactions that were providing potential migrants with financial backing from sources mentioned above.[56] However, the issue of providing financial support for refugees from Slovakia did not receive adequate attention.[57] Policies affecting banking procedures and the provision of funds for refugees fluctuated in response to political developments that took place during the period following the signing of the Munich Agreement. Importantly, the BCRC was also involved in negotiations with representatives of HICEM in London.[58]

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[52] AMZV Karton I 14, R9293 'Americká pomoc čsl. uprchlíkům, politické věci (americká pomoc čsl. uprchlíkům (1938–1947)'.

[53] 'The Problem of Jews', *SMH* (4 January 1939). See also Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část 1', 19–20.

[54] Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 12.

[55] Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část 1', 21 and 23.

Apart from organizing the distribution of funds provided by the British government and extending assistance to people who needed to leave the country, Stopford, worked with numerous activists involved in helping people to obtain visas, seeking affidavits from prospective employers (mainly for women who were to be employed in domestic service), and promoting the advantages of accepting refugees from Czecho-Slovakia in countries worldwide. The process of approving applications for visas was lengthy and complex and, given the precarious situation in which Jews found themselves, it was often necessary for foreign activists to visit consulates on their behalf and implore officials to issue visas without undue delay.[59]

The emigration of Czechoslovak Jews, as well as German and Austrian asylum seekers, was also organized by Czech Jewish refugee activists who worked in close cooperation with their JOINT and BCRC colleagues, often travelling abroad to make contact with foreign government and non-governmental organizations.[60] As a result, Jews who were persistent in their efforts to leave the country and to outlay funds as well as those who did not feel restricted by family circumstances, were mostly successful in escaping. It needs to be emphasized that efforts of refugee organizations and activists were essential in securing their passage to safety. Some of those who did not succeed in obtaining permission to emigrate to European countries, to Palestine, the United States, Canada, New Zealand or Australia, headed for Shanghai where visas were not required.[61] Altogether 356 Czechoslovak Jews found asylum in Shanghai.[62]

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[56] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, letters and cables between the Živnostenská, the Anglo-Czechoslovak Bank, and the BCRC regarding amounts of funds transferred by prospective emigrants, May 1939.

[57] Ibid. Letter from Dr Bezák, Ministry of the Interior, Bratislava, July 1939. The urgency of providing financial support to Jewish refugees from Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia was stressed in a letter sent to the BCRC, 2 September 1939.

[58] JOINT Archives 535_1_1939, letter from M. C. Troper to JOINT Headquarters in New York, 17 February 1939.

[59] The activists were Julian Layton, Ewart Culpin, Walter Creighton, Mary Ormerod, Margaret Layton, Trevor Chadwick, Beatrice Wellington, Margaret Dougan, Christine Maxwell, Tessa Rowntree, Margaret King, Honor Kingham, H. Verschoyle, as well as the American couple Martha and Waistill Sharp. On the work of Doreen Warriner, see Susan Cohen's article 'Winter in Prague, the Humanitarian Mission of Doreen Warriner', in the *Journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees* (August 2011); Velecká, 'Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace to vypuknutí války v roce 1939', 660–691.

It was the British government, however, that bore the brunt of the flow of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, in addition to those who escaped from Germany and Austria. As a result, there was concern that the financial support provided by the government and funds raised through appeals to the British public were being quickly exhausted. Moreover, employment possibilities for refugees were limited. To make matters worse, Sigismund D. Waley, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury maintained that money was 'wasted on Jews' when they applied for financial support to emigrate overseas.[63] In addition, the Dominions were reluctant to accept immigrants, whose passage and landing money were secured by government and non-governmental organizations in Britain. British migrants, favoured by the Dominions, could not avail themselves of the same support, to which immigration authorities throughout the British Commonwealth voiced their objections.[64]

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[60] Černý, 'Emigrace Židů z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941', 55–71. See also Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 308. The Prague activists were Marie Šmolková, Hana Steinerová, Jakub Edelstein, František Friedmann, Karl Sommerfeld, František Weidmann and Emil Kafka. See also 'The Czechoslovak Exile in London and the Jews', in Jan Láníček and James Jordan, eds, *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 18/2–3 (2012), A Valentine Mitchell Journal, 145–162.

[61] Peter Heumos, 'Flucht in den Fernen Osten: Schanghai' (Flight to the Far East: Shanghai), in *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei nach Westeuropa und dem Nahen Osten 1938–1945* (*Emigration from Czechoslovakia to Western Europe and the Middle East 1938–1945*) (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 111–116.

[62] Jiří Kuděla, 'Českoslovenští Židé v Šanghaji za II. světové války' (Czechoslovak Jews in Shanghai during the Second World War), *Časopis Slezského Zemského Muzea* B/54 (2004), 247–278.

[63] Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část. 1', 33.

The BCRC was given the task of managing funds donated by the British government. In addition, the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress were likewise involved in helping people who had to leave Czecho-Slovakia, providing assistance once they had arrived in Britain. Yet, in spite of all the obstacles mentioned above, refugees continued to arrive in Britain. Finding a place in order to escape was all-important given the escalation of antisemitism.[65]

For Jewish refugees there were additional obstacles and their journeys were not without risk. Travelling through Germany or Austria was hazardous. There were also countries that were ill disposed towards assisting Jewish refugees (Hungary, Rumania, Italy and Switzerland). Denmark was reluctant to open its borders because too many refugees were heading in that direction.[66] Notwithstanding this reality, many Jewish refugees hoped to be admitted to countries who would be interested in utilizing their professional skills. However, this was not always easy. For example, Canada favoured non-Jewish Sudeten German farmers and tradespeople but Jewish refugees were not welcome[67] and South Africa was inaccessible. The United States immigration quotas remained unchanged and the British appeared eager to stem the influx of Jewish refugees to Palestine. At the same time Czecho-Slovak authorities continued to exert pressure on Jewish citizens to emigrate.

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[64] Sherman, *Island Refuge, Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich*, 150.

[65] Jaroslava Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku (1940)' (The Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague, Genesis and activities from the beginning of 1940), *Terezínské Studie a Dokumenty* (1997), 10–27 and Černý, 'Emigrace Židů z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941', 55–71.

[66] Velecká, 'Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace to vypuknutí války v roce 1939', 669.

[67] Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*. See also Francis Raška, 'The Emigration of Sudeten German Social Democrats to Canada in 1939', in *Acta Univeersitatis Carolinae Studia Territorialia* V (2003), 135–150.

Appeals for Admission of Czechoslovak Refugees to Australia

As was the case before and during the Munich crisis, non-governmental organizations in Britain and Australia appealed to the Australian government to admit refugees from Czecho-Slovakia and to provide financial assistance for the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure. Moreover, letters written by concerned Australians and resolutions adopted by various organizations were sent to the prime minister, likewise urging the admission of Czechoslovak refugees and offering financial assistance to the besieged country. James Ralph Darling, the Headmaster of the Geelong Church of England Grammar School in Victoria, urged the establishment of a fund through which it would be possible to offer the refugees a new home in Australia.[68] The letter, sent on 2 October 1938, originally intended for publication in the press, was addressed to the prime minister instead. Darling's letter was answered on 19 October by the acting prime minister, Sir Earl Page. In this reply Page informed Darling that 'the feelings which prompted you to submit the suggestion are fully appreciated, but the government has reached the conclusion that it would not be appropriate to sponsor the proposed appeal'.[69]

Additional letters appealing for financial compensation were addressed to Lyons by Mary Wrigley (undated), by the president of the Westralian Branch of the League of Nations in Perth (4 October 1938), by Elsie Lillian Adams (undated),[70] and by Jack W. Roche, General Secretary of the Labor Council of Queensland (21 October 1938).[71] Dorothy Gibson from the International Peace Campaign in Melbourne requested the admission of

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[68] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126.

[69] NAA A461, P420/1, 'Assistance to Czechoslovakia', Item 97424.

[70] Ibid.

[71] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126.

Czechs and Germans to Australia in her letter of 21 October 1938.[72] A letter sent to Ada Constance Duncan, the Secretary of the Australian League of Nations Union, dated 25 October 1938, was from Bertha Bracey, the Secretary of the German Emergency Committee (London). Bracey pointed to the 'complexity of the Czechoslovak refugee situation, which added to her committee's struggle to come to the rescue of German and Austrian refugees'. Nevertheless, she was aware that the Czechs, as well as Sudeten Germans, Jews, social democrats and Catholics in Czecho-Slovakia were equally endangered.[73]

On 7 November 1938, Arthur Barrett, the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, cabled the prime minister informing him that, in response to the request of the Lord Mayor of London, he had called for a state-wide appeal for donations, which he expected would not exceed A£3,750. Barrett requested that the prime minister approve the transfer of funds to the Lord Mayor of London free of charge.[74] The issue of providing financial assistance to Czechoslovakia was also discussed during a Cabinet meeting on 11 October 1938, to which the Governor-General gave his consent. The Commonwealth government expressed its support for the raising of funds by public subscription.[75] Nevertheless on 11 November 1938, Lyons cabled Barrett that it was not possible to transfer funds to London free of charge. He assured Barrett that the government was 'giving considerations to the general question of making a grant to assist Czecho-Slovakian refugees'.[76] Barrett was not the only Lord Mayor in Australia to call for creating a fund for Czechoslovak refugees. Alderman Norman Nock of Sydney likewise established a fund to help refugees from Czechoslovakia.[77] An appeal to raise funds was also launched by Chas Harper, the Lord Mayor of Perth.[78]

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[72] NAA A461, 0420/1, 'War and Peace, Germany's relations with Czechoslovakia – General Representations', Item 97423.

[73] Ibid.

[74] NAA A981, REF 8, 'Refugees – General from Czechoslovakia', Item 180502.

[75] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126.

[76] Ibid.

[77] *SMH* (7, 8, 11 and 12 October and 9 November 1938) and *Kalgoorlie Miner* (12 October 1938).

[78] *The Westralian* (13 and 24 October 1938).

M. O'Day of the Footscray Branch of the CPA in his letter to Lyons of 7 November 1938, amongst other issues, requested that Australia provide assistance to Czechoslovak refugees.[79] Mel Mooney, the Secretary of the Preston Reservoir Central Unemployed Committee in Victoria sent a letter to Lyons on 10 November 1938 requesting him to provide asylum to Czech refugees.[80] So did E. Harrison of the Coburg Branch of the ALP in his letter to Lyons, dated 19 November 1938, in support of fundraising and accepting asylum seekers.[81]

Constance Duncan herself sent a letter on 16 November 1938 to the prime minister. The Australian League of Nations Union urged Lyons to admit 'a certain number' of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia to Australia. Duncan, apart from expressing her organization's concern over their fate, also mentioned the efforts of Lord Cecil, the president of the British League of Nations, who sent a personal letter to that effect to herself,[82] and that of Kathleen D. Courtney, the member of the Executive Committee of the British League of Nations who visited Australia in 1938. Courtney's circular, sent from London and dated 21 October 1938, outlined the desperate situation of Jews, Sudeten German social democrats, as well as non-Aryan Christians. She remarked that the Union's activities had the sympathy of Lord Halifax. The Dominions, in Courtney's view, should share the responsibility in enabling refugees to find new homes. Moreover, they would also gain advantages from the contribution these people could offer. Duncan then informed Lyons that the Victorian branch of her organization was establishing a committee that would assist the government in selecting refugees, to help them find employment and assimilate them into the Australian environment. At the same time her organization was urging the League's branches in other states 'to help establish similar committees'.[83]

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[79] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. Letter from Ada Constance Duncan to J. A. Lyons, 16 November 1938; Resolution adopted by the Council of the Australian League of Nations, 2 November 1938; letters from Kathleen Courtney, 21 October 1938, and Lord Cecil, 28 October 1938.

The Immigration Challenge

From reports sent to the Australian government from the Secretary for Dominions Affairs, the Australian High Commission in London, British government officials, the prime ministers of the UK and Australia and reports from British diplomats in Prague, as well as British and Australian refugee organizations, it is obvious that the Commonwealth government was well informed about the situation in Czecho-Slovakia. Moreover, the Australian press continuously described the plight of refugees seeking asylum in any country that was willing to admit them. However, the Commonwealth government was not prepared to make radical changes to its immigration policy in response to applications from Czechoslovak refugees for admission to Australia. The reality was that the government was concerned about the implications of an influx of foreign, non-British immigrants and their ability to adjust to Australia's lifestyle. These concerns were reflected in parliamentary debates.

From October to November 1938 the subject of admission of European refugees was raised in both Houses of the Australian parliament. The House of Representatives discussed the admission of Jews to Australia on 17, 22, 23, 25, 29 November 1938 following the Kristallnacht pogrom in Germany and German-occupied territories. On 12 October 1938 Senator Walter Cooper addressed the Senate and pointed out that desirable refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, who initially applied for landing permits to Australia at the High Commission in London, were now seeking admission to other

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[83] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. Letter from Bertha L. Bracey, secretary, the League of Nations Union, London, 25 October 1938.

Dominions due to incompetence and bureaucratic mismanagement.[84] It is not clear whether Senator Cooper was referring to Jewish or non-Jewish refugees. In his reply, Senator Alexander J. McLachlan reminded Cooper that this was a matter for the Department of the Interior to address and promised to bring it to the attention of the deputy prime minister.[85] There was only one mention in the House of Representatives of Sudeten German Refugees. On 20 October 1938 Eric Harrison, member for Wentworth, NSW posed a question on notice to Sir Earle Page:

> Has a message been received from the Dominions Office concerning the urgent request by ex-Sudeten refugees for asylum in the Dominions? If so, will he inform the House of Australia's attitude to this appeal and whether the request is supported by the British government?
>
> Lyons (through Sir Earle Page) – The answer to the Honourable Member's question is as follows: No proposal has yet been submitted and the Commonwealth government is not in a position to indicate its attitude until particulars and information relating to any such proposal are received.[86]

When examining *Hansard* records, it was obvious that there were mixed feelings amongst parliamentarians with regard to the admission of Jews to Australia. There was recognition of the precarious situation the refugees had found themselves in, but the uncertainty of the impact of the refugees was reinforced by the prejudices of the anti-Jewish lobby groups. In fact, there were strong objections voiced by members of the Returned Services League, the musicians' union, by small business owners, civil servants, as well as professional groups (medical, dental and legal). Jewish immigrants were considered by some sections of the Australian population as outlandish in their manners. Their European appearance and their heavily accented and often inadequate knowledge of English were seen as different. More importantly, however, there was fear of competition from highly skilled professional Jewish migrants amongst sections of the Australian professional community which in turn had an impact on anti-immigration sentiments in wider sections of the Australian population. Sir Frank Clarke, the president of the Victorian legislative council went as far as to call them 'slinking, rat faced men'.[87]

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[84] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, Senate, 12 October 1938, 584.

[85] Ibid. and NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. League of Nations Victorian Branch.

[86] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 22 November 1938.

The unease with which Members of Parliament viewed this issue was summed up by Paul Bartrop when he referred to the question raised by Frank Forde, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on 22 November 1938 to the prime minister, asking him to explain whether the Commonwealth had made a decision to accept Jewish refugees or whether it was acting upon a request from the British government, given that Britain was now paying the price for its policy of appeasement.[88]

The answer was not long in coming. On 1 December 1938 John McEwen, the Minister for the Interior, issued a statement on behalf of the Commonwealth, in which the Australian government reiterated that it was ready to accept 15,000 refugees over the period of the following three years at a rate of 5,000 per year. The government decided not to increase the quotas announced at the Evian Conference in June of that year, even though Bruce had recommended that these be doubled to 30,000, following the Kristallnacht pogrom of 9–10 November 1938.

McEwen explained that it was necessary to admit a third of the number of refugees progressively so that the existing living standards of the majority of Australians were not reduced. Furthermore, he declared that the refugees should be divided into classes according to their races: Aryans, non-Aryan Christians and Jews. He stressed that while Jewish refugees were taken care of by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS), no organizations had so far been established to care for non-Jewish refugees. The conditions for admission to Australia were the following: the refugee must be of good character and in good health (evidenced) and have at their disposal A£200. Should maintenance be guaranteed by an approved individual or organization in Australia, then the landing money was to be reduced to A£50.[89]

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[87] Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 188–192.

[88] Paul Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994), 101.

Following McEwen's announcement, Dr James Bernstein from the HICEM (HIAS–JCA Emigration Association) in Paris forwarded a message to his colleagues in Prague, informing them about possibilities for emigration to Australia. People whose professional skills were sought, who were in possession of A£200 and were conversant in English, would be eligible for admission. Completed application forms, available from the Passport Control Officer at the British Legation in Prague, would be made available to Bernstein who would apply directly to Canberra on their behalf. He warned that prospective migrants should not raise their expectations too high in anticipation of a positive result.[90]

However, the statement made by McEwen did not address the Czecho-Slovak refugee problem in particular. Instead, it dealt with European refugees in general. On 20 December 1938 the acting High Commissioner of Australia in London, Duncan, sent a secret cablegram to Lyons requesting that special arrangements be made to admit Sudeten German non-Jewish refugees from Czecho-Slovakia to Australia. Duncan assured Lyons that the refugees would have the necessary funds required for settlement, provided by resources in Prague and London, to which the ex-Mayor of London Sir Harry Twyford was willing to contribute £5,000 for passage and landing permits. Duncan stressed that he undertook to explore the possibility of accepting 'a proportion of Aryan Sudeten German refugees on the basis of the announcement made on 1 December 1938'.[91]

In reply to his cablegram, Duncan received a cable from Joseph Carrodus, who indicated that it would probably not be possible to make exceptions to the statement made by McEwen on 1 December 1938. However, he was prepared to explore further possibilities. On the same day Carrodus sent a secret memorandum to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department who in turn directed Carrodus to McEwen's statement on the admission of European refugees. While Lyons' secretary made it clear that it would be possible to deal with an additional 500 German non-Jewish Sudeten refugees in the following twelve months, he suggested that these refugees should complete Form 47, accompanied with the necessary certificates of fitness and good character, including a specific request to endorse the form as 'German Sudeten non-Jewish refugees'. The memorandum stated that the refugee must be of 'a suitable type' for admission to the Commonwealth. Furthermore, it would be necessary to know the number of refugees, their professions and the number of their dependents. As far as religion was concerned, it was important to state whether the refugees were Catholics or non-Catholics. With regard to landing money and/or a guarantee by a person living in Australia, the same conditions applied to them as to those mentioned in the statement made by McEwen on 1 December 1938.[92]

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[89] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 180–181 and NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. See also *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 1 December 1938.

[90] Archives of HIAS–HICEM, Series I, Section XXIX, Prague Committee for German-speaking refugees. YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York. Translated from the French by Anna Rosenbaum. I express my thanks to Dr Kateřina Čapková for forwarding the file.

[91] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. See also NAA A461, P420/1, 'Assistance to Czechoslovakia', Item 97424.

At the time when the Czechoslovak crisis was escalating, on 4 July 1938 *The Age* of Melbourne, published an advertisement on its front page from Cooks Shipping Offices that read:

> EUROPE 1939 – Book early and Avoid Disappointment.
> Make your Reservations
> Now at Cooks' Office. Sailing to England 1939 Season

The ships that were to carry Australian tourists to Britain were: the *Monterey*, the *Niagara*, the *Mariposa* and the *Aorangi*. We do not know how many people booked their voyages to Europe in the course of that year. However, according to my database, we do know that in 1939 three Czechoslovak Jewish refugees sailed towards Australia on the *Monterey*, two on the *Mariposa* and six on the *Aorangi* – three of the many ships that carried a cargo of hopeful Czechoslovak refugees from 1938 to 1942 on sea lanes leading to the distant continent.

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[92] Ibid.

Six months after the Munich Agreement was signed in September 1938, the Nazi takeover of Bohemia and Moravia, and the creation of a separate Slovak state under Nazi protection in March 1939, further destabilized the situation in Europe. The situation of Jewish people trapped in a country that had been effectively wiped off the map of the world became even more dangerous.

CHAPTER 6

Czechoslovakia's Refugee Crisis: The Australian Perspective

> While the world is aghast at Germany's latest breach of faith in callously annexing Czecho-Slovakia, Australia, contrary to Britain, has a great opportunity to improve her own position and incidentally assist in solving the refugee problem by a drastic revision of her immigration policy … Thousands of useful citizens would bring with them knowledge and experience which would take us years to acquire. This seems a golden opportunity for us.[1]
>
> — Editorial, *SMH* (1939)

This article offers an enlightened approach to the refugee crisis in early 1939. The author recognizes that Britain is in a difficult position with regard to the reception of refugees, while noting that Australia does have a place for 'skilled labour' and 'useful citizens'.

At the beginning of 1939, the Czecho-Slovak government's cooperation with the German Reich was deemed essential to secure the country's survival. The antisemitic policies of the government, therefore, had an impact on every aspect of Jewish life. By 27 January 1939, Jews were no longer permitted to hold positions in the civil service, practice medicine or law, or be employed in engineering professions, and universities cancelled the tenure of Jewish academics.[2] In addition, German and Austrian asylum seekers were ordered to leave the country as soon as possible. Many left within 48 hours.[3] While the official policy promoted the necessity of 'racial cleansing', the dismissal of Jewish professionals opened new vistas for their Gentile colleagues who no longer had to compete for employment. Thus, this discrimination against Jewish professionals met with the approval of the wider Czech public and intensified the Jewish refugee problem. For some people, as noted in the *SMH* in March 1939 (cited above), this represented an opportunity for Australia to attract more skilled immigrants, although the government was more circumspect.[4]

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[1] 'Australia's opportunity', *SMH* (20 March 1939).

[2] Blanka Soukupová, 'Čeští Židé mezi Mnichovem a 15. březnem 1939' (Czech Jews between Munich and 15 March 1939), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina za druhé republiky* (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2007), 93–94.

Adding to the crisis, many Jewish and Sudeten German social democrats sought shelter in what was left of Czechoslovakia. They also needed financial assistance for survival and emigration.[5] During that period George Rublee,[6] the head of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees, negotiated with the German government on the evacuation of refugees.

In terms of funds available there were a number of sources. The fund of the Lord Mayor of London's Committee in Aid of Refugees from Czechoslovakia reached £360,000, while the Relief Committee in Prague collected £260,000, the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia was in possession of £80,000 and the *New Chronicle* newspaper, the British Red Cross and Save the Children Fund had at their disposal £5,000. An additional fund was also established by Lord Baldwin, which reached £282,000.[7]

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[3] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158. Letter to Dr Camil Šlapák of the Institute for the Care of Refugees, 15 February 1939.

[4] Soukupová, 'Čeští Židé mezi Mnichovem a 15. březnem 1939', 84–98.

[5] '10,000 Refugees Will Leave Czechoslovakia, Constant Nazi Pressure Creating Alarm in the New Republic', *Maryborough Chronicle*, *Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser* (6 January 1939).

[6] The Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees was established in the wake of the Evian conference, which took place the previous year.

[7] 'Fresh Rush of Refugees, Czechs Fear Germany', *SMH* (4 January 1939).

Government Responses

In January and February 1939, Stirling transmitted a statement to the Department of External Affairs made by Sir Herbert Emerson, the new High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations. Emerson was anxious to have his mandate extended to include everyone who was left homeless and stateless, including Germans and Austrians who found asylum in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s.[8] Furthermore, Stirling reported on the situation of refugees from the Sudetenland, as described in the communiqué sent to Canberra by the Acting High Commissioner Duncan on 5 January 1939. The report focused on financial assistance to be provided to the refugees by the United Kingdom and France. It also dealt with the reluctance of the Soviet Union to accept refugees from Czecho-Slovakia. In fact, the refugees themselves were reluctant to seek admission to the Soviet Union for fear of persecution.[9] In a coded cablegram of 17 January 1939, Duncan informed Hughes, McEwen, Menzies and Page that he asked Stirling to consult an official from the Foreign Office 'who knows Czechoslovakia thoroughly' to give him his opinion on the expatriation of German Sudeten non-Jewish refugees. According to the official they were a 'good type' of refugees, adding that communists were not to be considered for admission to Australia.[10] This statement was repeated in a memorandum issued by the Prime Minister's Department on 19 January 1939.[11]

Another important letter was sent to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs on 27 January 1939, in which Stirling reported on the visit of the Czech Foreign Minister Dr František Chvalkovský to Berlin on 21 January 1939. Hitler complained to Chvalkovský that Czecho-Slovakia was unable 'to adopt the German method [...] and that he was not fully confident that the present Czecho-Slovak government was able to eliminate the anti-Nazi and Jewish elements from the country'. Stirling also referred to Hitler's insistence that the Czecho-Slovak government must urge the expulsion of Jews because 'they were the root of all the present troubles in Europe'.[12]

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[8] NAA A981, CZE 22, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany, Miscellaneous Resolutions Part I', Item 174723. Letter from Alfred Stirling, 11 January 1939.

[9] Ibid. Letter from Alfred Stirling, 13 January 1939.

[10] NAA A461, P420/1, 'Assistance to Czechoslovakia', Item 97424.

[11] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

In Australia, the debate on Czechoslovak refugees took a new direction. The Consul-General of Czecho-Slovakia in Sydney František Květoň requested a meeting with McEwen in December 1938 to discuss the admission of Czechoslovak refugees to Australia. However, the meeting did not eventuate until 17 January 1939, when McEwen and immigration official, Thomas Hugh Garrett, made themselves available to the Consul-General in Canberra. Květoň made a direct appeal to both officials to open Australia's borders to his country's refugees, citing hardship suffered as a result of the collapse of his country's infrastructure, leaving refugees with no other option than to move to other countries. McEwen told the Consul that he was well aware of the damage to Czecho-Slovakia, given its loss of territories to Germany, Poland and Hungary. Moreover, McEwen pointed out that his government would be amenable to give special consideration to migrants from Czecho-Slovakia because in the past they had been an asset to Australia. Nevertheless, he pointed to the difficulty in accepting Czechoslovak refugees because the federal government did not have facilities to welcome newcomers in ports and to help them integrate into Australian society. In order to be able to assist refugees arriving from his country, the minister continued, it would be prudent to have a Czechoslovak migrant organization, at least in Sydney, that would assist the Ministry of the Interior in the selection of migrants upon the organization's recommendation and see to it that an official would be at hand to help them settle in.

The Minister told the Czech diplomat that Jewish refugees who inhabited regions ceded to Germany and were in the care of the London committee for refugees [*sic*] would only be approved for admission to Australia upon recommendations made by the AJWS. Jewish refugees who were resident in Czecho-Slovakia (meaning those who were still considered

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[12] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717.

Czecho-Slovak citizens) would not be admitted to Australia. However, Květoň also reported that McEwen alleged that the AJWS refused to recommend the admission of more wealthy Jewish refugees because it (the AJWS) feared an increase of antisemitism in Australia. Furthermore, McEwen maintained that Australia would not accept Gentile Czech or Slovak refugees from ceded territories because they enjoyed the protection of the Czecho-Slovak state. With regard to migrants domiciled in Czecho-Slovakia proper, there would be no limitations applied to those whose professions were sought (for example mining and metallurgy experts) because he did not envisage problems with their absorption. Nevertheless, the Consul stressed that this consideration did not apply to Jews.[13]

A further meeting took place the following day between Květoň and Garrett, during which the Consul requested that Australia should lower its requirement of A£200 and A£100 for a family, A£40 for individuals and A£20 for domestic workers, payable by prospective Czecho-Slovak migrants. According to Květoň, these people would not be in a position to find employment immediately following their arrival. Garrett promised to submit the Consul-General's request to McEwen in anticipation that he would give him his decision in writing. However, at the time of writing his letter, Květoň reported that a reply had so far not been received.[14]

On 19 January 1939, unaware of Květoň's discussions with McEwen and Garrett, the Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care in Prague, Dr Vlasatý, sent a letter to the Consulate-General in Sydney, raising the question of admission of Czechoslovak refugees. He was referring to a report, according to which the federal government was said to have taken a sympathetic view towards their situation. Vlasatý, therefore, requested information as to how many refugees would the Australian government be prepared to admit on a yearly basis, whether it would agree to let the Ministry in Prague know what categories of employment were in demand, what were the preferred locations for settlement and whether the Australian government was willing to include refugees of German nationality, Christian and Jew. A request for the lowering of the amount of landing money or waiving it altogether was also put forward, given that the amount of money required for re-settlement in Australia was daunting and would deter interested migrants from applying. For this reason Vlasatý inquired whether the Australian government would agree to a down payment scheme in order to enable prospective migrants to cover their travelling expenses. Given that the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care was about to select qualified migrants, as per above specifications, the Ministry was interested to know whether the Australian government would agree to give consideration to this request. It would be appreciated, Vlasatý continued, if Australian authorities were able to provide the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care a considerable number of application forms for people interested in immigrating to Australia.[15]

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[13] AMZV, LA 1938–1939, Karton 478, Sekce V3, Oddíl spisovny T., 'Vystěhovalectví do Austrálie', Číslo 28584, 1939, dne. 27.2.1939, Podatel: Generální konzulát ČSR v Sydney, číslem 86/30 ze dne 23.I.39. 'Austrálie: Zvýšení přistěhovalecké kvoty pro Československo'.

[14] Ibid.

Signs that the situation in Czecho-Slovakia was about to take a turn for the worse became clear at the start of 1939. In a letter to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Stirling reported that the Sudeten German Nazi Party was given 'full liberty to pursue its political activities in Bohemia and Moravia'. Having lost control over its own course, the Czecho-Slovak government was inevitably drawn into the political schemes of its powerful neighbour,[16] confirming the urgency of the situation, highlighted by Květoň, Vlasatý and Constance Duncan.

When examining the question of the admission of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia to Australia, it becomes obvious that the Commonwealth government was concerned about the impact of an influx of foreign refugees, while to Australian non-governmental organizations the survival of the refugees was of primary concern. In the aftermath of the Munich Agreement and following the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, Australia House in London was inundated with applications for landing permits.[17] As early as 3 January 1939 Sir Harry Twyford sent a letter to Lyons, in which he recalled his interview with Bruce regarding the predicament of Czecho-Slovak refugees. During his conversation with Bruce, Twyford promised to set aside a substantial amount of money to cover the refugees' costs of travelling to Australia, as well as the required A£200 required for the issue of a landing permit.[18] Accompanying the letter was a memorandum addressed to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior in Canberra, dated 5 January 1939, outlining the situation of Czecho-Slovak refugees in Britain 'pending their admission to other countries'.[19]

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[15] Ibid. Letter from Dr Vlasatý, to the Consulate-General of Czechoslovakia in Sydney, 19 January 1939.

[16] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Letter from Alfred Stirling, 27 January 1939.

Enclosed was also a list of migrants who were supposed to arrive in Australia. However, the list actually contained names of people who had requested admission to New Zealand. There was, nevertheless, important information on the misplaced list. These applicants were Sudeten German social democrats. For obvious reasons they were unable to provide police certificates of good character, nor affidavits on the state of their health which the Australian authorities required and of which Twyford was aware. The applicants were also Catholics and Lutherans. In his reply to Twyford on 26 January 1939 Lyons reiterated that, apart from the required landing money, the refugees' admission must not be detrimental to the Australian work force. Lyons acknowledged the efficiency of the AJWS in assisting Jewish refugees, adding that he hoped that organizations for the absorption of Aryan and non-Aryan Christians would be set up in the not too distant future.[20]

The Department of the Interior later issued a memorandum, which outlined directives for determining whether an applicant was a genuine refugee. A refugee was defined as 'a person of German nationality, former German, Austrian, or Czechoslovakian nationality, against whom there is political discrimination. It applies particularly to Jews and non-Aryan Christians'.[21] On 13 January 1939 McEwen gave his approval to the memorandum.[22]

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[17] Senator Walter J. Cooper (Qld.), *Hansard, Parliamenary Debates*, Senate, 12 October 1938, 584.

[18] NAA A981, CZE 22, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany, Miscellaneous Resolutions Part I', Item 174723. Letter from Sir Harry Twyford to Joseph Lyons, 3 January 1939.

[19] Ibid. Letter from Sir Harry Twyford to Joseph Lyons, 5 January 1939. See also 'Money for Czech Refugees: Amount of Sir Harry Twyford', *SMH* (4 January 1939).

[20] NAA A981, CZE 22, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany, Miscellaneous Resolutions Part I', Item 174723. Memorandum no. 39/497 (12 January 1939) and letter from Alfred Stirling, 11 January 1939.

In January 1939, the Minister for External Affairs received a request sent by the High Commissioner for Refugees to communicate whatever comments the Australian government might have regarding its position on the refugee crisis in Czecho-Slovakia. This request was based on a resolution adopted by the Council on 17 January 1939, in which the High Commissioner for Refugees requested an extension of his powers to include refugees from territories ceded by Czecho-Slovakia to Germany. In order to be able to submit his report on the above situation, the High Commissioner noted that Australia's views would be welcomed. The attachment specified the position of the refugees who were now stateless, due to the cession of the territory they inhabited to Germany. In view of this situation, the High Commissioner stated, that it was his duty to assist these refugees to resettle in other countries. For this purpose it would be appreciated 'if governments would take immediate considerations [for] the adoption of administrative measures which would tend greatly to facilitate the orderly emigration and final settlement of the refugees'.[23] The reply was long in coming. Eventually a handwritten note at the bottom of a letter, dated 23 March 1939, stipulated that the request should be directed to the prime minister and the Minister of the Interior. It was only on 5 April 1939 that A. R. Peters, the officer of the Department of the Interior, wrote to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs that the Department of the Interior had no objections to the High Commissioner's extension of mandate to include Czecho-Slovak refugees from territories ceded to Germany.[24]

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[21] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068. Memorandum Department of the Interior no. 383374, signed by A. R. Peters.

[22] Ibid.

[23] NAA A981, League REFU 8, Part 2, 'League of Nations Refugees High Commissioner For Refugees Part II', Item 178533. Letter from the High Commissioner, Geneva to the Minister for External Affairs, 24 February 1939.

Lyons himself wrote to Duncan, the Acting High Commissioner in London on 9 March 1939, stating that all requests for admission to Australia must be processed by the High Commission of Australia in London, which was solely authorized to either approve or refuse admission to Australia to applicants who were either Aryans, non-Aryan Christians and Jews. As far as Jews were concerned, Australia House was to approve applications of prospective migrants who were in possession of A£3,000 and were considered suitable 'in all respects', whereas non-Aryan Christians and Aryans should obtain a landing permit, provided that they have a capital between A£200 and A£1,000 and are likewise suitable. Lyons repeated the demand that the admission of prospective migrants must not be to the detriment of Australian workers. Following the processing of applications in London, all cases were to be submitted for approval to the Department of the Interior in Canberra. It was obvious that the financial criteria for admission of Jewish refugees were significantly higher than those for non-Jewish refugees.[25] Importantly, Lyons concluded his letter by announcing that consideration would be given to sending a Commonwealth officer to the continent to report on the situation and that Garrett would be in charge of the investigation. The announcement about the arrival of an Australian officer to London to set up an immigration processing department had been released to the press as early as 16 February 1939.[26]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068. Memorandum from the Department of the Interior on the Admission of Refugees, Consideration at Australia House. See also Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 134 and NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[26] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068.

Response of Australia's Non-governmental Organizations

Efforts were undertaken in Australia to facilitate the admission of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia with the establishment of the Refugee Emergency Council in New South Wales in December 1938. The new organization was the initiative of the leadership of the Australian League of Nations Union.[27] Raymond G. Watt who became the Secretary of the New South Wales branch, received notification from Joseph Carrodus on 23 December 1938, informing him:

> It is probable that applications will be received in this department in the near future for the admission of German Sudeten non-Jewish refugees. You will be communicated with immediately upon receipt of the applications. It is thought that this information, which it will be appreciated is confidential, may be of value in connection with the establishment of the Emergency Refugee Council in New South Wales.[28]

Carrodus was referring to a reply sent by the Prime Minister's Department to the Acting High Commissioner in London in December 1938, discussed above. He reiterated the prime minister's statement that their admission was not to be to the detriment of Australian workers. At the same time Carrodus made it clear that communists were not to be allowed to settle in Australia.[29]

The aim of the Refugee Emergency Council was to co-operate with the German Emergency Fellowship Committee. In January and February 1939 the Council, together with representatives of the Continental Catholics Migrants Welfare Committee (C. N. Williamson), the AJWS (I. Green, G. Davis and H. Lesnie), the German Fellowship Emergency Committee (Dr M. R. Lemberg), the Inter-Church Committee for the Relief of non-Aryan Christians (T. Wright), as well as the Honorable Crawford Vaughan, resolved to focus on assisting refugees. Their aim was to secure employment for refugees, to co-operate with official and voluntary organizations in Australia, to encourage the establishment of industries that would provide employment to new arrivals, to extend hospitality to refugees, to co-operate with other welfare organizations, together with allied State Councils, and to urge the formation of a Federal Council. However, the committee, without referring to countries where refugees came from, concluded that refugees preferred for immigration were 'young people under the age of thirty and married couples with young children because they were best suited to adjust to life in Australia'.[30] The Council received the support of Bishop Charles V. Pilcher,[31] the Labor Council of NSW, the National Council of Women, the Country Women's Organization and Camilla Wedgewood, the Secretary of the German Emergency Fellowship Committee.[32]

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[27] NAA A659, 1939/1/4451, 'Refugees (Emergency Council) Organization in New South Wales for their absorption (assimilation)', Item 137487.

[28] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

[29] Ibid.

Czechoslovak refugees also received a mention in the annual report of the German Emergency Committee for 1937–1938, which was established 'for the purpose of doing something to help these people who were suffering under the present regime in Germany and who wished to leave their native land and come out to start life anew in Australia'.[33] At its first meeting on 12 January 1939, the Refugee Emergency Council of NSW forwarded an appeal to McEwen, stating, that 'in view of many known instances of delay on the part of the authorities regarding the granting of permits, the Commonwealth government be urged to make whatever arrangements might be necessary to expedite decisions'.[34]

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[30] NAA A659, 1939/1/4451, 'Refugees (Emergency Council) Organization in New South Wales for their absorption (assimilation)', Item 137487. German Emergency Fellowship Committee, First Annual Report 1937–1938. Signed by G. B. Wedgewood – President, R. Lemberg (Hon. sec.), 19 January 1939.

[31] 'Assimilation of Refugees – Emergency Council, New Sydney Body', *SMH* (20 December 1938).

[32] NAA A659, 1939/1/4451, 'Refugees (Emergency Council) Organization in New South Wales for their absorption (assimilation)', Item 137487. Minutes of Meeting of the Germany Emergency Council, 13 February 1938; Memorandum of the Australian League of Nations, Correspondence between Camilla Wedgewood and T. H. Garrett, 4 April 1939.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

Significantly, Council members agreed that information regarding its aims should not be disclosed because it would not be appreciated by all Australians.[35] Even though Czechoslovak refugees were only mentioned marginally, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Refugee Emergency Council was primarily concerned with the issue of landing permits to all people who needed to escape Europe. However, given the multitude of applications submitted by refugees, it remains unclear why the Council requested only twenty copies of Form 40 (admissions for relatives and friends) and twenty copies of Form 47 (application for permits to enter Australia).[36]

Watt was keen to enlist the co-operation of McEwen whose department was in charge of issuing landing permits. McEwen apologized for not being able to attend the Council's meeting scheduled for 24 January 1939, stating that Carrodus would deputize for him. When it was announced that the Council would meet on 6 February 1939, McEwen again apologized for not being able to attend but announced that Garrett would be present. Summarizing the outcome of the meeting of 6 February 1939, Watt pointed out that Garrett expressed doubts about the usefulness and capacities of the Council, which to Watt seemed incomprehensible.[37]

Not unlike the federal government, the Refugee Emergency Council pursued its humanitarian activities on the basis of the refugees' religious affiliations. In spite of the fact that the Council was committed to extending assistance to all refugees, it was understood that it was necessary to form separate groups of Jews, Catholics and Protestants. However, this did not preclude the Council from urging the Commonwealth government to do its utmost to save as many refugees as possible, irrespective of their religious persuasion.

In December 1938, the *SMH* reported on the establishment of the Refugee Emergency Council of NSW in a number of articles. All of the articles stress the urgency of the situation, drawing the attention of its readers at the same time to the functionality of the Council.[38] The *Cairns Post* likewise commented on the activities of the Refugee Emergency Council of NSW, quoting Jewish Welfare Leader Gerald de Vahl Davis who proposed that 'a special committee should weed out undesirable migrants after Canberra had dealt with them'. McEwen replied that the Commonwealth government reserved the right to select the refugees.[39]

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[35] Ibid. German Emergency Committee First Annual Report 1937–1938. Czechoslovak refugees were included in this report.

[36] Ibid. Letter from Raymond Watt to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, 11 January 1939.

[37] Ibid.

In the wider community there was some resentment towards Jewish immigrants from Germany, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, which manifested itself in 'anti-reffo' hysteria[40] and was a matter of concern for the government. A report entitled *Absorption in Australia of Refugees from Central Europe*, written during the war, based on press reports, noted that in 1939 'a wave of uneasiness about large-scale immigration of Jews from Germany, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia was spreading rapidly'.[41]

In contrast to this an important article relating to the situation in Czecho-Slovakia was published in *The Argus* on 3 January 1939, written by Dr R. Sussex, an Australian academic who upon his return to Australia was to take up the position of Vice-Master at Queen's College in Melbourne. Sussex urged the Australian government to admit Czecho-Slovak refugees, because they were highly skilled workers with an outstanding military background and would therefore be of immense value to Australia.[42]

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[38] 'Emergency Council, New Sydney Branch', *SMH* (20 December 1938). 'Urgent Refugee Problem, Government must help', *SMH* (21 December 1938), 'Refugee Welfare', *SMH* (22 December 1938). See also 'On the newly found Refugee Emergency Council', *SMH* (24 January 1939).

[39] *Cairns Post* (11 January 1939).

[40] See Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Australian Responses to Jewish Refugee Migration before and after World War II', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 31/1 (1985), 28–29.

[41] NAA A433, 1940/2/520, 'Absorption in Australia of Refugees from Central Europe', Item 74007. The report was not signed. See also Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 188–189.

[42] The date of the publication of the article in *The Argus* coincided with the letter sent by Sir Harry Twyford to Joseph Lyons.

The Collapse of Czecho-Slovakia: Responses in Australia

Further emphasizing the precarious situation in Czecho-Slovakia, the *SMH* published an article on 4 January 1939, entitled: 'Fresh Rush of Refugees, Czechs fear Germany'. The article was written by the diplomatic correspondent of the British *Daily Telegraph* and its importance cannot be underestimated. Apart from reporting 'that recent applications for visas have been as numerous as the applications made during the panic immediately after the Munich Agreement', the correspondent stated that rumours were circulating in Europe that Germany would annex Czechoslovakia in the spring. They turned out to be correct.[43]

One of the first measures taken by the Australian government at the very beginning of March 1939 was the reintroduction of Australian visa requirements for Czecho-Slovak citizens as of 1 April 1939.[44] This decision followed that of Britain, which had already decided upon its re-introduction by the end of 1938 in order to 'control aliens holding Czechoslovak passports who may seek admission to this country'.[45] The increased numbers of arrivals from Czecho-Slovakia to Britain signalled a deterioration of the state of affairs in the country. As was the case in the weeks preceding the signing of the Munich Agreement, a steady flow of information on a new crisis about to impact on Czecho-Slovakia was also reaching the Australian government. In a lengthy report dated 10 March 1939 Stirling described the worsening relations between the central government in Prague and the leadership of the Slovak autonomous government. Stirling also revealed that Germany had demanded the settlement of German minority claims and the reduction of Czech combat troops.[46]

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[43] 'Fresh Rush of Refugees, Czechs Fear Germany', *SMH* (4 January 1939).

[44] NAA A1608, B41/1/3, 'Czechoslovakia Part 3', Item 206159. Letter from A. R. Peters, Secretary of the Department of the Interior, 8 March 1939, followed by a similar letter sent by the Minister for External Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 March 1939. See also NAA A433, 1940/2/3030, 'Migrants Consultative Committee Re: Jewish Refugees', Item 74032. Letter from T. H. Garrett to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 16 January 1939; NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126. Draft, Telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs by J. A. Lyons.

[45] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126. Letter from the Foreign Office to B. C. Newton, Esq. Prague, 13 January 1939.

A secret coded cablegram was sent from the Acting Australian High Commissioner in London on 11 March 1939, addressed to Bruce and Lyons, in which Duncan expressed his opinion that the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia was imminent. Although the Dominions Office was aware that another constitutional crisis was about to take place in Czecho-Slovakia, Duncan referred to a conversation between the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Josef Beck, the British Ambassador in Warsaw and Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, who foresaw the complete dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia. A cablegram sent by the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs to Lyons on the same day confirmed that the leadership of the Slovak government was in opposition to the policies of the Prague government, thus confirming the news dispatched by Duncan earlier that day.[47] Moreover, in a cablegram sent two days later by the Secretary of the Dominions Office to Lyons, the establishment of a Slovak government led by Karol Sidor was announced, indicating that the situation in Czecho-Slovakia had further deteriorated. According to the secretary's statement, the German press broke the news of alleged terror tactics launched by the Czechs against the German minority, thus confirming Duncan's suspicion that 'this may well be the prelude to some action by Germany'.[48]

The Secretary for Dominions Affairs, in a secret cablegram of 14 March to Lyons, reported on the movements of the German army towards the Czecho-Slovak border, on Hitler's declaration that he would eradicate the 'Beneš spirit', protect the German population against attacks from the Czechs, and use force against Prague if necessary. France and the United

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[46] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717.

[47] NAA A981, CZE 6, Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703.

[48] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717.

States were urged not to intervene, while Czech President Emil Hácha and Foreign Minister Chvalkovský were summoned to Berlin.[49] At the same time, the Hungarian government demanded the withdrawal of Czech armed forces from Subcarpathian Ruthenia and the release of Hungarian prisoners.[50]

Early in the morning on 15 March 1939, the Czecho-Slovak crisis reached its climax. Disregarding the Munich Agreement,[51] German troops crossed the frontier and began occupying the remnants of the country. The gravity of the situation, which signalled the collapse of the policy of appeasement and exposed the failure of the British government to correctly evaluate Hitler's intentions, was reflected in Chamberlain's speech in the House of Lords, which was forwarded to the Australian prime minister. In a face saving statement, aimed at justifying his actions at Munich, the British prime minister declared that it was 'it was a shock of confidence, all the more regrettable because confidence was beginning to revive and to offer a prospect of more concrete measures which would of general benefit'.[52] At the same time the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs sent a secret cablegram to Lyons in which he informed Lyons:

> His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom have no desire to interfere unnecessarily in which other governments may be more directly concerned than this country [...]. His Majesty's government believe, the German government denote no less importance than they do themselves and the fruitful development of which depends so directly upon the general state of confidence.[53]

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[49] On Hácha's and Chvalkovský's reception in Berlin see Sir Nevile Henderson, *My Two Years with Hitler*, Part 12, serialized by *The Adelaide Advertiser* (22 April 1940).

[50] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Cyphered cablegram from the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs.

[51] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. 'Hitler Crosses the Rubicon', *SMH* (17 March 1939), 'The Disturber of Peace', *The Age* (17 March 1939).

[52] Chamberlain, House of Commons Debates, 15 March 1939, *Hansard*, *Parliamentary Debates (UK)*, 5th series, vol. 345 (1939), cc 435–555.

[53] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Circular B.94. The message conveyed by the British Ambassador in Berlin to the German government.

Neither the British ambassador in Berlin, Henderson, nor the British Ambassador in Prague, Newton, appear to have been able to foresee Hitler's designs on the dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia. While in Prague the Czecho-Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed to Slovak efforts to establish an independent country. Hitler at first appeared to be indifferent to Czecho-Slovakia's internal affairs, before deciding to take matters into his own hands. He declared his support for 'independent' Slovakia upon the request of Father Jozef Tiso who was invited for discussions in Berlin. By then he had clearly made up his mind to dissolve the country and 'crush all Beneš, communist or Jewish cliques'.[54]

Hitler's invasion of Czecho-Slovakia, the declaration of Slovak 'independence' and the establishment of what became known the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia sent shock waves around the world. Six months prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the Czech nation and its Jewish population found themselves under German occupation and as with the Anschluss, Gestapo terror began without delay.[55] The Slovaks, encouraged by Hitler to secede from Czecho-Slovakia, were now able to pursue their own national ambitions under his protection. Slovak Jews were the immediate victims of an indigenous fascist regime that was anxious to seek the collaboration of German experts on racial purity and participate in plans leading not only to the exclusion of Jews from Slovak society but in the end to their extermination on a mass scale.[56]

In terms of the relationship between Australia and the former Czecho-Slovakia after 15 March 1939, the issues were complex and of significance to both countries and included the adoption of measures that were to affect Australian immigration policy towards Czecho-Slovak refugees in the lead up to the start of the Second World War. Not unlike the rest of the world,

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[54] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. ((The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703.

[55] 'Arrests in Prague. Secret Police. All Factories guarded. Jews terrified', *SMH* (23 March 1939).

[56] Kamenec, *On the Trail of Tragedy*. Eduard Nižňanský, *Holokaust na Slovensku* (*Holocaust in Slovakia*) (Bratislava: Milan Simecka Foundation, Jewish Community, 2003).

Australia was deeply disturbed by the news of Czecho-Slovakia's dissolution. Of particular importance was the question of whether Britain would continue to provide loans to a country that no longer existed. As it turned out the grant of £4 million earmarked to help people to leave the country, was not affected by the events.[57] In terms of government reaction Lyons declared that his Cabinet would meet to discuss the situation and expressed support for the British government, but noted that he did not consider it necessary to summon parliament at that point in time.[58]

There are no documents available that reveal the exact nature of the Australian Cabinet's reaction to events that took place in Czecho-Slovakia on 15 March because Cabinet sessions began to be recorded only in September 1939, after the outbreak of the war. However, at the time of Czecho-Slovakia's dissolution, it was the menace that Japan posed to British interests in South-East Asia and Australia that was the focus of the exchange of cablegrams between the British and Australian governments. The issue of Australia's defence capability was of primary importance. This concern was shared by Britain whose assistance to Australia would be vital should a conflict with Japan eventuate. Thus, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Central Europe following Germany's invasion of Czecho-Slovakia was necessarily of lesser concern to Australian policy makers.[59]

Indeed, it was only through Stirling's detailed letter, sent by airmail on 22 March 1939 that the Australian government became informed about the full state of affairs in former Czecho-Slovakia. The initial news of the country's dissolution and the events directly leading up to it were summarized in a secret telegram sent by the Australian diplomat on 15 March 1939.[60] He reported on the sequence of events that had followed since February 1939, when Slovak leaders on their own initiative decided to negotiate with the Germans. He noted the tension that had arisen between the central government in Prague and the Subcarpatho-Ruthenian administration. In his more detailed report Stirling provided the Australian government with a comprehensive summary of the German occupation. He explained that the country had now become an integral part of Germany. Political, economic, diplomatic, postal, telegraphic, customs, monetary and military administrations were to be subjected to the German Reich. German military garrisons were to be established. The person in charge of the Bohemian and Moravian provinces was to be the German protector. Furthermore, the request of the Slovak government for Hitler's protection of the state had been acceded to. In addition, Hungarian troops had begun their occupation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Importantly, he also noted that thousands of refugees, including Czechoslovak military units, had defected and were now gathering in neighbouring Poland and in Rumania.[61]

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[57] 'German troops march, Slovaks and Czechs part, the Slovak crisis', *SMH* (15 March 1939) and 'Czechoslovak loans, Hitler crosses the Rubicon, The new Protectorate', *SMH* (17 March 1939).

[58] In an article published by *The Argus* on 20 March 1939, Lyons was quoted as saying that the Cabinet would probably meet in Melbourne on Tuesday to discuss the international situation. See also 'Cabinet meets to-day, Bruce at hand, Australia will support Britain', *SMH* (21 March 1939).

[59] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 61, 69, 71 (14, 17, 18 March 1939).

As had been the case in Britain, the Australian government appeared astonished by Hitler's latest incursion. While official documents on its reaction in March 1939 are not available, two important statements were released to the press. Three days after the German invasion took place, the *SMH* published the following statement issued by Lyons:

> I must give expression to my profound disappointment and alarm at the events, which have taken place during the past few days. We felt assured that the Munich Agreement had affected a settlement of the Czecho-Slovak question and that agreement determined the extent of the German occupation of the country. […] It is clear that the German government is effecting a military occupation of territories inhabited by people who are not of the German race. […] We look to the future with deep misgivings.[62]

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[60] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Letter from Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 22 March 1939.

[61] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717 and 'Camp for refugees in Poland', *SMH* (21 March 1939).

[62] 'Lyons' Concern', *SMH* (18 March 1939).

Unable to distance himself from Britain's foreign policy, Lyons now appeared to understand that Hitler was not a partner who could be trusted and as a consequence the Munich Agreement, which he himself had supported, was a failure. His words 'we look to the future with deep misgivings' reveals that he finally recognized the menace that Hitler posed to the entire world.

The second statement came from Billy Hughes, the Minister for External Affairs, whose defence of Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis the preceding year had been dismissed and whose warnings of the consequences therefore went unheeded. The *SMH* reported on 20 March 1939 a statement, broadcast on Sydney's 2GB radio station the preceding night (together with the Premier of New South Wales Bertram Stevens), in which Hughes condemned the German occupation of Czechoslovakia:

> Thus far and no further must be the policy of the democratic nations, not in some remote future, but now […]. There will neither be peace nor security till the aggressor nation had been halted in their career of conquest and lawlessness. Democracy could not ignore the arrogant challenge of the totalitarian states.[63]

The Australian press now became preoccupied with Hitler's latest incursion and subjugation of what remained of the Central European country and condemnation of Hitler's aggression was universal. Interestingly, although none of the Australian newspapers remained indifferent to Hitler's deceptive methods and his obvious disregard for existential rights of other nations,[64] there was a clear divide in their individual assessment of the situation. *The Age* went as far as to state that although Hitler was a menace, one must also take into account the policies of the Czecho-Slovak government which considered Germany to be its greatest neighbour with whom it was good to trade.[65] The *Bulletin*, a long-time foe of Czecho-Slovakia, judging by its coverage of the Munich crisis, issued a statement on the situation but expressed little sympathy for the Czechs. Hamilton's negative attitude towards Czechoslovakia, published after the Munich Agreement was signed, was once more recalled and the editor quoted him saying: 'When Masaryk goes, Beneš will not last long and neither will Czechoslovakia'. The *Bulletin* continued to uphold the merits of Chamberlain's accomplishments, which nevertheless had been undermined by Hitler's 'monstrous violation of the Munich settlement in the spirit if not in the letter'. The *Bulletin's* assessment was a mixture of support for the policy of appeasement and face saving admissions of its misjudgement of the situation, when it quoted Hughes' broadcast on the situation on 2GB. What is confounding to us now is the editor's rhetorical question in which he wondered whether what Hitler did to Czecho-Slovakia was 'a drive set in motion towards the USSR at last'?[66]

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[63] 'Totalitarian Threat. Australian View. Notable Broadcasts. Mr. Hughes and Mrs. Stevens', *SMH* (20 March 1939).

[64] 'The disturber of Europe's peace', *The Age* (17 March 1939).

[65] Ibid.

Similarly, *The Age* and *The Argus*, while denouncing Hitler's dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia, still voiced their support of the Munich Agreement and expressed regret that all hopes for a lasting peace had been dashed.[67] *The Argus* was of the opinion that the law of the jungle prevailed because Hitler tore up scraps of paper when the Czech state was invaded. That action called for denunciation but not intervention. Nevertheless, *The Argus* continued to express its support for Chamberlain's policy at Munich.[68] On the other hand, the *SMH* was relentless in condemning Chamberlain and the policy of appeasement that had enabled Hitler to further his aspirations for the conquest of Europe.[69]

J. A. McCallum, whose protest against the Munich Agreement had been published in his letter to the editor of the *SMH* on 7 October 1938, noted that the leaders of the British Commonwealth had a moral obligation to extricate themselves from the shame of capitulating to the demands of a dictator. His 'Epilogue to Munich' was a rallying cry to right the wrongs, to stand up to the aggressor and reach out to his victims:

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[66] 'Hitler plays false', *The Bulletin* (22 March 1939).

[67] 'A Call to the Democracies', *The Age* (21 March 1939).

[68] 'Bruce is Hopeful', *The Argus* (17 March 1939) and 'Approach to Peace' (17 March 1939).

[69] 'The Challenge', *SMH* (18 March 1939) and 'Facing the Future', *SMH* (18 March 1939).

> The immediate task is to restore the powers and moral ascendancy of the British Commonwealth. In all humility I suggest that to do this we must be ready to do any duty our government may legitimately impose on us, yet be watchful of any action our government may take, we must, to retain self-respect, take some action to relieve the sufferings of the people of Czecho-Slovakia who are not, in the language of hyperbole, but quite literally, now being wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquity. Moral outrage, or intellectual insight, or both, was lacking. Let us confess it.[70]

Radio stations also reported on the situation. Although only a couple of broadcasts are at present available, they are, nevertheless, significant. The first dealt with a review of the situation.[71] The speaker was Herman David Black (later Sir Herman), who prior to becoming Chancellor of the University of Sydney was a lecturer in economics at the university and adviser to the Treasury Department of the New South Wales State Government. At the beginning of his broadcast, Black referred to a cartoon, which he remarked was the last one drawn in an independent Czecho-Slovakia. It showed a shield crossed by a sword and a folded umbrella, so that both viewers of the cartoon in Czecho-Slovakia and listeners in Australia were immediately reminded of the reality that Germany had been able to strike a gambit with Britain, and following Britain's betrayal of the country in the heart of Europe, was now in a winning position. That betrayal empowered Hitler to act and to strike down all the countries that he desired to eliminate on the European chessboard. While not referring at all to the game of chess, Black's presentation of the situation in Europe showcased his expertise in political science and his foresight. Interestingly, although a strong supporter of refugee migration, he did not mention the suffering of Hitler's victims. Instead, as a political economist he concentrated on the enormous power that Hitler acquired by being able to gain the upper hand in Czecho-Slovakia, to place his minions against each other and, consequently, to secure their wealth in an effort to pursue his ambitions without resistance, or hindrance. The broadcast provided the

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[70] Letter to the Editor, *SMH* (17 March 1939).

[71] Broadcast on radio station 2FC at 9.15 pm, 26 March 1939.

Australian listener with a precise picture of the situation and demonstrates a remarkable insight into the world of contemporary politics.[72]

The following day, 27 March 1939, Robert Menzies made an official announcement on Radio 2E in Sydney in association with Radio 3XY in Melbourne on Australia's foreign position, as affected by events in Europe. Menzies was, as noted above, convinced that the Sudeten German grievances were justified. Moreover, he was relentless in his criticism of Czechoslovakia's position (and Beneš's in particular) and expressed his admiration for the spirit of the people in Nazi Germany. Now, that Hitler had broken his promise in the Munich Agreement, Menzies reminded listeners that it was the injustice done to Germany after it was defeated in the First World War that had brought about the current situation. He also emphasized that it was France that was eager to 'knock the enemy down and not let him get up'. In contrast, he maintained that 'the British people were not revengeful and would rather prefer bygones to be bygones' and suggested that Germany should have been 'helped to get on its feet again'.

In order to emphasize this point, Menzies spoke about the Weimar Republic's last Chancellor Heinrich Brüning who was in exile in Britain and whom Menzies had met during his European tour in 1938.[73] Brüning impressed Menzies with his opinion that had France and Britain helped Germany to regain its position, Hitler would not have risen to power. Had Germany's appeals been heeded, Menzies continued, there would not have been conflict in Austria, Czechoslovakia or Memel. And now the world was to be confronted with the result.

However, Menzies also commented that one could not acquire territories without conquest and added that the Czechs, in his opinion, were people of great valour. He wondered whether it was realistic to believe that they would give up their identity: 'It is one thing to say to these people to take what was stolen, but it is another thing to say that they will be conquered'. Turning his attention to the Poles and the Italians, who, in his opinion, were ruled 'by a man of great intelligence', Menzies asserted that there was no reason for panic and the best thing to do was 'to keep the ball of negotiations open because why, in the name of Heaven, should war be inevitable between Germany and Britain'? Menzies then made his final point in which he declared: 'we should encourage talk of peace and peace so long as we can and should'.[74]

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[72] NAA SP369/2, 'H. D. Black Esq. Scripts 1939', Item 308190.

[73] 'Peace Hopes, World War not Inevitable, Menzies's Survey of the Situation', *SMH* (12 September 1938).

When judging Menzies' broadcast, the following issues should be taken into account: Menzies needed to justify his previous assertion that Germany was in the right and, therefore, in the interest of preserving world peace, it was prudent to continue negotiating with Hitler. On the other hand, Menzies now expressed feelings of sympathy towards the Czechs, which were in contrast to those opinions that he held during the Czechoslovak crisis in 1938. The Nazi takeover of Czecho-Slovakia therefore posed a number of challenges to the Australian government, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[74] Source: National Film and Sound Archives, Sydney. Media: Radio. Produced as: spoken word.

CHAPTER 7

Australia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

> The cost of Munich to the Czechs is now being paid; the cost to the rest of Europe is still undetermined.[1]
>
> — Editorial, *SMH* (1939)

Government Responses

The demise of Czecho-Slovakia not only caused a problem for various European governments, it also created a number of challenges that the Australian government had to resolve. The cost of the Munich Agreement, as indicated above, was one that would be paid many times over. For Australia in particular, the first issue concerned the future of the European nation's diplomatic representation in Australia. The Consulate-General in Sydney was staffed by three Czechoslovak diplomats – Consul-General František Květoň, Vice-Consul Dr Adolf Solanský and Commercial Attaché Ladislav Vašek, while honorary consuls in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were Australian citizens. Following the disintegration of Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939, the diplomats' further activities in Australia came into question.[2]

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[1] 'Epilogue to Munich', *SMH* (16 March 1939).

[2] See Chronology of Events.

The State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Berlin, Ernst von Weizsäcker, issued an order on 16 March 1939, to the Czech Foreign Minister Chvalkovský, in which he ordered him to instruct Czech missions abroad:

> 1) to notify the government to which they were previously accredited that they have given up their function as Czech representatives
> 2) to ensure the smooth transfer of the former Czech Mission(s) to the German diplomatic representative on the spot.[3]

Chvalkovský submitted to the order and instructed Czech diplomats to comply. In accordance with the above directive, the German Consul-General in Sydney Dr Rudolf Asmis entered the premises of the Czech consulate on 20 March 1939 and demanded the handover of the legation. Květoň told Asmis that he had no instructions to that effect, but Asmis insisted that he was acting on orders from Berlin that were issued as a result of the demise of Czecho-Slovakia.[4]

This development caught the Czech diplomats and the Australian government by surprise. Australia turned to the British government for advice. Colonel Hodgson cabled Stirling to find out whether similar demands on Czech diplomats had been made in Britain and in other countries with which Czecho-Slovakia had diplomatic relations.[5] Stirling sent a secret cablegram, informing the Department of External Affairs and Strahan, the prime minister's secretary, that Czech consulates in Palestine and Egypt had encountered the same problem. Stirling informed his superiors that the legal position was now under examination in Britain.[6] In his letter to the Secretary of External Affairs in Canberra, Květoň let it be known that having reached the age of retirement, he wished to relinquish his position on 31 March 1939 and leave Sydney on the same day. Moreover, he informed Hodgson that Vice-Consul Dr Adolf Solanský had been appointed by him to take over the Consulate.[7]

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[3] *Documents on German Foreign Policies 1918–1945*, Series D, 6, Document Number 2050/447264, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London 1956, 7.

[4] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 43, 73.

[5] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Cyphered cable from Hodgson to Stirling, 20 March 1939. See also Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, sections 43, 58, 87, 88, 104n, 107.

[6] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717.

The following week on 27 March 1939 Asmis informed Hughes that Květoň had handed the Consulate over to him and that he had given instructions to all Czechoslovak Consuls in Australia to hand their legations over to their German counterparts. In addition, Asmis informed Hughes that he had opened a branch to be known 'as the Section for Czech Affairs' in the rooms of the former Czech Consulate with Ladislav Vašek temporarily taking charge of the office.[8] On the same day Květoň forwarded his letter of resignation to Lyons in which he informed the prime minister that he had acted according to Asmis's orders, that Vašek was to be in charge of Czech affairs at the German Consulate in Sydney and that Czech Chambers of Commerce were to merge with those of Germany. At the end of the letter he thanked Lyons for the courtesy extended to him during his tour of duty in Australia.

Lyons thanked Květoň for his letter and services on 28 March 1939, expressing his 'deep personal regret at the severance of our happy relationship and appreciation of ever cordial efforts to maintain the most friendly spirit between Czechoslovakia and this country'.[9] Hughes sent a similar letter to Květoň on 30 March 1939 and wished him and his wife all the best for the future. It was the fear of the future that prompted the Czech Consul-General to relinquish his duties and depart Australia immediately. On 26 March 1939, Weizsäcker had threatened that should Czech diplomats refuse to submit to his orders, their salaries, their personal property and incomes, as well as those of their dependents who resided in the Protectorate, would be sequestered.[10]

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[7] Ibid. Letter from Květoň to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, 24 March 1939.

[8] Ibid. Letter from Asmis to Hughes, 27 March 1939.

[9] Ibid. Letter from Lyons to Květoň, 28 March 1938.

[10] *Documents on German Foreign Policies 1918–1945*. Telegram from the State Secretary in Berlin to the Legation in the Protectorate, 26 March 1939, 2050/447350–61,

Issues surrounding the dissolution of Czechoslovak consulates in Australia did not end with the departure of Consul Květoň. On 9 April 1939 the *SMH* reported that the Consul for Czecho-Slovakia in Western Australia (Bernell) refused to hand the Consulate over to the German Consul in Perth. On Friday and on Tuesday the Consul for Czecho-Slovakia in South Australia (Cato) did the same. The newspaper further reported that Hughes made an announcement in which he stated that 'the Consul-General for Germany was not recognized by the Commonwealth government as the representative of Czecho-Slovakia in Australia'.[11] Hughes' statement was later repeated in a letter sent to the prime minister by the New South Wales Premier's Department on 1 May 1939. Importantly, Athol Richardson who wrote the letter on behalf of the Premier, informed the prime minister that Vice-Consul Solanský would remain in Australia 'that he had been recognized as the official representative of Czecho-Slovakia and will continue to do so until the Protectorate would be recognized by the Commonwealth as existing "de jure"'.[12] While Solanský's refusal to comply with Asmis' demand was supported by Hughes, the Australian government was unsure how to deal with the situation and sought advice from London.[13] The British government, which appeared to be likewise undecided, did not acknowledge Germany's request to take over the Czech Legation in London. Given the attitude of the British government, the Department of External Affairs in Canberra, in an unsigned document dated 9 May 1939 declared:

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no. 102, page 125, and NAA, C123, 9697, 'Solansky, Adolf (Czechoslovakian)', (Box 294), Item 729799. Police Headquarters Sydney, 7 November 1941 and Testimony of Dr Adolf Solanský.

[11] 'Czech Consuls Hand Over', *The Advocate* (28 March 1939).

[12] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Letter by Athol Richardson to the prime minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1 May 1939. See also 'Statement of Mr Hughes', *SMH* (28 March 1939).

[13] Ibid. Secret telegram to External Affairs Officer, London, 20 March 1939 from Col. Hodgson.

> The position in Australia was considered by the Cabinet and it was decided that the Commonwealth government should act in conformity with the attitude of the United Kingdom, French and United States government by refraining from recognizing German control of Bohemia and Moravia and the right of German officials to deal with Czechoslovak affairs abroad. No acknowledgment of the German Consul General's letter of 27 March was to be forwarded.[14]

On 7 April 1939 Lyons suddenly passed away and was succeeded by Menzies. In his reply to the NSW Premier, Menzies confirmed that the German Consul would not be recognized as the representative of the former Czecho-Slovak Republic in Australia, that Solanský would replace Květoň and that Commercial Attaché Vašek had not been authorized to deal with Czech affairs at the German Consulate-General.[15] However, despite it now being clear that Germany's policies were aimed at obliterating any trace of Czechoslovakia's sphere of influence worldwide, Menzies continued to support the policy of appeasement. Following the Czecho-Slovak fiasco, the British government had not wasted time giving assurances of its support to Poland, should that country be invaded by Germany. Menzies, however, remained convinced that 'our approach should be liberal and generous as long as the generosity is at our own expense', a view he held up until the outbreak of the war,[16] thus confirming Toenniessen's conclusion that he totally misjudged the situation.[17]

Upon becoming prime minister, Menzies made changes to his Cabinet. Hughes, who opposed the policy of appeasement, became Attorney General, while Sir Henry Gullett became the new Minister for External

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[14] Ibid. 9 May 1939. See also NAA, C123, 9697, 'Solansky, Adolf (Czechoslovakian)', (Box 294), Item 729799. Letter from Police Headquarters Sydney to Inspector Wilson MPI. Section, 7 November 1941.

[15] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Letter by Athol Richardson to the prime minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 May 1939. See also Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, sections 43, 58, 87, 88, 104n, 107.

[16] Cablegram from R. G. Menzies, prime minister, to N. Chamberlain, UK prime minister, 27 August 1939 in Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, section 156, 191.

[17] Toenniessen, *An Analysis of the Changing Basis of Australian Foreign Policy*, 166.

Affairs. Not long after that, on 9 May 1939, the House of Representatives began its deliberations on the international situation.

Responses from Federal Parliament

While Hitler's aggression was largely condemned by the Australian Federal Parliament and considered a betrayal of the spirit of the Munich Pact, there were divisions amongst Members of Parliament in response to the overall situation in Central Europe. Senator McLeahy, the Leader of the Senate expressed his disappointment that hopes for saving world peace had not come to pass and mentioned Hitler's ill treatment of Jewish people. On the other hand, Senator Darcey (Tasmania), launched a vicious antisemitic attack, blaming German Jewish bankers, who, according to him, had become influential financial advisers to the United States government. Jewish bankers, Darcey alleged, were at the root of all of the world's trouble. He also accused the leaders of Czechoslovakia of causing suffering to the Austrian nation in the period following the end of the First World War.[18]

Eddie Ward (ALP) and William Hutchinson (UAP), who had voiced their objections to the sell-out of Czechoslovakia at Munich, were, as expected, relentless in condemning the latest developments in the former Czecho-Slovakia. So was William J. F. Riordan (ALP) who was highly critical of recent events. In his speech he revealed for the first time that on 10 May 1938 Chamberlain had announced at a private dinner hosted by Viscountess Astor that Czechoslovakia would be handed over to Germany. The matter, according to Riordan, had been kept secret. His condemnation of Germany's aggression was scathing.

Curtin, on the other hand, once more proved that his understanding of foreign affairs left much to be desired, as he preferred to concentrate on the plight of the unemployed. Turning to world events, he suggested that Australia would benefit from establishing diplomatic representation in New Zealand, Washington and Tokyo. As far as the present situation in Central Europe was concerned, Curtin continued, it had been caused by the 'unjust consequences of the Versailles Treaty'. He then linked the danger Hitler posed to Europe to the struggle of the working classes for better living conditions. At the same time he declared his support for Australia's ties to the British Commonwealth of Nations.[19]

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[18] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, Senate, 9 May 1939, 387–393.

If Curtin's statement in parliament was underwhelming, then Menzies' was misconceived. His incessant adulation of British politicians was mingled with sorrow that their efforts to secure a lasting peace at Munich had not been realized. Menzies alleged that they had been misused by their foreign partners, whose ulterior motives were to exploit the noble efforts of the British government for the pursuit of their own policies. To disguise his misconception of Germany's policies and his opposition to Czechoslovakia's position in 1938, Menzies began posing rhetorical questions, the purpose of which was to persuade the House that the situation in 1938 was confusing and therefore his attitude was correct because the 'grievances in Europe were real'. Admitting that errors had been made, Menzies felt an obligation to declare his admiration for the 'magnificent example of the United Kingdom […] in dealing with the affairs of Europe', with which he wholly identified. He then expressed his belief that nations would gather around the conference table in an honest effort to divest themselves of past enmities and unite in their quest for peaceful resolutions of conflicts.[20]

The message of the new Minister for External Affairs was straightforward and clear: Hitler's efforts to liberate the Sudeten Germans from the 'Czech yoke' was merely a decoy to help him realize his real intentions six months later. Gullett declared:

> The objective of Germany has become purely material and conquest is openly planned for the glorification of Germany and the gain of currency reserves, productive soil, or anything else which in Hitler's mind is necessary or desirable to the Fatherland.[21]

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[19] Ibid. 199–305.

[20] Ibid. 231–236.

[21] Ibid. 195.

This statement was significant in that Gullett showed his ability to assess correctly the situation in Europe. By pointing to the looting of conquered territories, he brought forward an urgent issue that was also addressed by the Australian press: the commercial treaty with Czechoslovakia, ratified by both countries in 1937.[22]

Economic Repercussions

Following the dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia, Germany staked its claim to the occupied country's wealth and its international economic agreements. Germany was particularly keen to secure the rights to import Australian wool. Some textiles factories were located in the Sudetenland, where the Germans expropriated all Jewish-owned firms as soon as they annexed the region in October 1938, including those of the Schick and Pick families who owned a conglomerate of textiles enterprises.[23] However, the main centre of the Czech textiles industry was Brno, the capital of Moravia, where 98 per cent of textiles factories were Jewish owned. Two of the factories, Max Kohn and Feldhendler et Cie. *w*ere owned by the Tugendhat family. Another Jewish-owned textiles factory, taken over by the German authorities, was the Jellinek & Seidl enterprise.[24]

According to Bohumír Smutný,[25] archivist of the Moravian Regional Archives in Brno, there is evidence that textiles factories in Brno imported Australian wool. Unfortunately, Czech archival material is incomplete because most of it was destroyed by the retreating Germans as the war was nearing its end. It is known that after 15 March 1939, Jewish businesses were taken over by administrators, the so-called 'Treuhänder', who were German employees of the firm or German solicitors residing in Brno. What followed was the process of 'Arisierung' (Aryanization) of Jewish properties whereby new German owners were rewarded for their efforts towards the advancement of the National Socialist cause.

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[22] The future of the commercial treaty between Czechoslovakia and Australia was first debated in Federal Parliament on 12 October 1938.

[23] Correspondence with Peter Charles, an Australian who is a descendant of the Schick and Pick families (13 January 2013).

[24] Otto Seidl was the biological father of Dorothy Kiers, whose refugee story is included in the final chapter. Dorothy was also the adopted daughter of Robert Tugendhadt-Tugen. Interview with Dorothy Kiers (Melbourne, July 2012).

[25] My gratitude goes to Dr Bohumír Smutný, who supplied me with information on the process of Aryanization and the history of the factories, amongst them those owned

The Australian press was the first to raise the question of the trade treaty with Czechoslovakia. The *SMH* stated that the treaty might be cancelled and although the clause stipulated a period of three-month notice, the paper argued it could be withdrawn immediately in response to Germany's aggression.[26] A second article offering the same views was published on 30 March 1939. The *SMH* maintained that it was for Australia, not for Germany to decide, what to do about the treaty and that Australia should refuse not only legal recognition for Germany's deed but also reject trading with Germany because of its occupation.[27] The *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill) meanwhile reported that the German representative in Australia had urged the Commonwealth government not to interfere with the trade treaty,[28] and *The Argus* reported that both Asmis and Vašek declared that 'trade relations between Australia and Czechoslovakia would not be affected by the fact that Germany now controlled Czech territory'.[29]

On 19 May 1939 the question of the trade treaty with former Czechoslovakia was once again raised in Federal Parliament. John Jennings (UAP) asked the new Minister for Trade and Customs, John Lawson (UAP), about the future of the treaty. The minister replied that trade arrangements remained unchanged. He asserted that the matter would be dealt with by the Commonwealth government. Eddie Ward (ALP) was interested to know whether the minister could define the area that was in

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by the Tugendhadt and Seidl families. I am also indebted to Dr Petra Meretová for sending me a list of Jewish-owned textiles factories in the city of Brno.

[26] 'Czech Trade Treaty Cancellation Expected', *SMH* (24 March 1939).

[27] 'Czech Trade Agreement', *SMH* (30 March 1939).

[28] 'Trade Treaty with Czechs', *Barrier Miner* (25 March 1939).

[29] 'Trade with Germany', *The Argus* (18 March 1939).

question, to which Lawson gave an evasive reply. He maintained that the situation was unsettled due to the confusion brought about by the Munich Agreement and what he termed 'subsequent events'.[30]

The following day *The Argus* informed its readers that the Commonwealth government was negotiating with the German government and according to the Minister for Commerce, the existing arrangements would continue so far as the Protectorate area was concerned until negotiations were completed and the position defined.[31] This decision reached by the Australian government should not come as a surprise, because according to Hitler's decree of March 16 'the existing Czecho-Slovak customs duties in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia will remain in operation until further notice'. Furthermore, 'telegrams of instructions were to be sent to governments that were in trade relations with Czecho-Slovakia'.[32] On 22 May 1939 Stirling informed the Department of External Affairs that the position of the British government with regard to the trade agreement with Czecho-Slovakia was that no special arrangements were being envisaged.[33] The problem, therefore, remained unresolved. However, the British Legation in Berlin did advise the Australian government that restrictions applicable to imports into Germany must now apply.[34]

Of interest at this time is also an article published by *The Argus* which drew the attention of its readers to the news that reserves of Czechoslovak gold in the Bank of England had been handed over to Germany.[35] This was an issue that later came under investigation after the war had come to an end.[36] On 28 June 1939 Stirling referred to an article published by the correspondent of the *Sunday Times* in Prague that a decree had been issued by the 'Reichsprotektor' of Bohemia and Moravia to the effect that Jewish properties, estimated at the value of £100 million were to be transferred to German authorities. The correspondent further commented that the majority of large firms in Bohemia and Moravia were owned by Jews.[37]

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[30] *Hansard, Parliamentary Debates (Australia)*, House of Representatives, 19 May 1939, 568.

[31] 'Trade with Czechs, Definition sought', *The Argus* (20 May 1939).

[32] Telegram to the Director of the Economic Policy Department to the Embassy of the United States, no. 94, 23 March 1939, W VIII a 601 II. No. 71, in *Documents on German Foreign Policies 1918–1945*, Series D. 6, 84.

[33] Neale, *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–1949*, 94.

[34] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126.

[35] 'Reich Seizes Gold', *The Argus* (20 May 1939).

An undated memorandum issued by the Department of Trade and Customs, entitled 'Extent to which the advantages granted to Australia of the Czechoslovak agreement have been nullified by the recent territorial changes', dealt in particular with wool exports to Czechoslovakia. The report contained figures indicating that when Czechoslovakia lost the Sudetenland region 60 to 70 per cent of wool exports were diverted to Germany. In the aftermath of Hitler's invasion on 15 March 1939 the entire wool industry was taken over by the Germans. Sales figures for imported Australian wool from 1938 to 1939 then decreased by 50 per cent.[38] At this time the Australian government was also made aware of the fact that German authorities were in control of the supply of raw materials necessary to secure industrial production. The Germans also took charge of commercial negotiations.[39] Moreover, as far as Australian export commodities were concerned, Asmis let it be known that unless they were validated by German Consular authorities in Australia, their export to the Protectorate would not be approved.[40] Regardless of these changes, the Australian government apparently did not consider abolishing its trade treaty. The fact that most companies, in particular those importing Australian wool, were originally properties of Jewish owners seems to have been considered irrelevant and the issue never warranted further investigation in Australia. The total weight of wool exported to Czecho-Slovakia in 1938–1939 amounted to 7,960,052 lbs,[41] and was worth A£1,268,242.[42]

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[36] See Vít Smetana, 'Británie a československé zlato "case study", britského appeasementu' (Britain and Czechoslovak gold, 'case study' of British appeasement), *Soudobé dějiny* 8/4 (2001), 621–658.

[37] NAA A981, CZE 18, Part 4, 'Czechoslovakia – Incorporation into the German Reich March 1939', Item 174717. Memorandum sent by Alfred Stirling to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Canberra, 26 June 1939.

[38] NAA A981, TRAD 42, 'Czechoslovakia – Commercial relations between Czechoslovakia and Australia', Item 181094. See also D. F. Nicholson, *Australia's Trade Relations: An Outline of Australia's Trading Relations* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1955), 86–88.

[39] NAA A1667, 69/B/91, 'Czechoslovakia – Relations with Australia (1938–1939)', Item 139126. Letter to Sir Henry Gullett from the Commercial Councillor of the British Embassy in Berlin, 11 July 1939.

An article published in *The Argus*[43] on the acquisition by Germany of all industrial complexes in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, informed the Australian public that commissars had taken over the administration of all banks and that Germany was now in the process of establishing credit in countries which were until that time out of its reach. According to the newspaper article, Lyons was willing to enter into commercial negotiations with Germany. Indeed, it was not until the outbreak of the Second World War that commercial treaties concluded with countries that came under German occupation ceased functioning for the duration of the war, under the Trading with the Enemy Act, brought into effect on 9 September 1939.[44]

T. H. Garrett's Fact-Finding Mission to Europe in 1939

In response to the British government's appeal to the Dominions to assist in absorbing refugees from countries already under German domination and the ever increasing number of applications by Jewish refugees for Australian landing permits, Thomas Hugh Garrett was dispatched to Europe in April

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[40] 'Goods for Bohemia and Moravia', *The Advertiser* (29 June 1939).

[41] NAA A461, J325/10/2, 'Wool. Export to Czechoslovakia', Item 93803.

[42] *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 39 (1953), Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistic-History. Prepared by the Right Honourable The Treasurer by S. R. Carver, Acting Commonwealth Statistician by authority of L. F. Johnson (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1952).

[43] 'Trade with Germany, Lyons' View', *The Argus* (18 March 1939).

[44] *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 39 (1953).

1939. He was to personally acquaint himself with the situation in London and observe the treatment of the Jewish population in several European countries. The announcement of his intended trip to organize immigration procedures in London was released to the press on 16 February 1939. Garrett was instructed to ascertain the 'racial origin' of each refugee who was applying for a landing permit: was the applicant a Jew, an Aryan or a non-Aryan Christian? To meet this requirement Jewish applicants were required to complete Form 40, which was to confirm that their approval was supported by a guarantee issued by family members or the AJWS, or Form 47, for refugees with desired economic skills or employment. The 'Are you Jewish' question was to be completed by all applicants on Form 40 and Form 47.[45] In general, a person was classified as a refugee 'if he/she was of German nationality or of former Austrian or Czechoslovak nationality, against whom there is political discrimination. […] in particular Jews and non-Aryan Christians'.[46]

Garrett was conscious of his responsibility to draw correct conclusions in accordance with guidelines set for Australia's immigration policy. His assessment, based not only on the situation of European Jews, but primarily on his evaluation of their potential for Australia's future development was to serve as a blueprint upon which decisions on their admission to Australia were to be made. It is also important to mention that upon becoming Australia's prime minister, Menzies nominated Senator Hattil Spencer Foll to take over the portfolio of the Ministry of the Interior from McEwen. Foll was not known for his sympathies towards the plight of Jewish refugees.[47]

Upon arrival in London, Garrett set out his programme of duties and ideas on measures to be taken by the Australian Department of the

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[45] Rutland, *The Edge of the Disaspora*, 236; see also Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 150–155.

[46] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068. See also Lyons' instructions to Acting High Commissioner Duncan on 9 March 1939 mentioned above. Memorandum Department of the Interior, no. 38/33374, 12 July 1939.

[47] Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 144–148.

Interior, aimed at implementing new strategies for immigration policies. These were outlined in letters written to Carrodus. In his interim report, dated 23 June 1939, while reiterating policies of the Australian government towards Jews, Catholics and non-Jewish non-Catholics, Garrett confirmed that it would be prudent to establish an immigration branch at Australia House in London in order to prevent undesirable types of applicants from entering Australia. In his report, which he wrote on 28 June 1939, he also made it clear that he required time to acquaint himself with the refugee problem in London. Garrett stressed that it was important to select officials of outstanding managerial capabilities who would be able to deal with a complex situation. Selecting the 'good type of refugee' was an essential requirement of the Department of the Interior for issuing a landing permit.[48]

Those refugees who fled to Britain from countries already under Nazi domination were eager to secure a safe place out of Germany's reach while Jewish asylum seekers from Hungary, Poland and Rumania anticipated a deterioration of their situation, given their own governments' sympathies for Hitler's antisemitic policies. They too were interested in finding new homes beyond Europe. Bartrop alludes to Garrett's disdain for these people who, in his opinion, were not suitable for admission to Australia.[49]

Garrett was aware that German and Austrian refugees, who had been in Britain for some time, were looked after by the German Aid Committee, which extended assistance to the Hilfsverein der Juden in Deutschland in Berlin and the Fürsorgenzentrale der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Vienna. He also knew that the situation of the refugees from Czecho-Slovakia was different because the Hilfsverein der Juden in Deutschland was not active in Czecho-Slovakia. However, a Quaker organization in Prague did provide aid and refugees who gathered in London in their thousands were given assistance by the BCRC and the British government.

Bartrop dwells on assignments that Garrett undertook after having arrived in London to prepare for his study trip to the continent, which

[48] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068.

[49] Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 163. See also Albrecht Dümling, *The Vanished Musicians: Jewish Refugees in Australia* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016).

would have been a daunting task for an Australian government official without previous experience in dealing with people whose mentality and way of life were foreign and difficult to understand. He notes Garrett's tense relationship with British Jewish refugee activists, Dennis Cohen, Ben Levy and in particular Julian David Layton. Garrett alleged that Layton sought to influence the leadership of the AJWS to bring pressure on the Australian government to accept as many Jewish refugees as possible.[50] He considered Layton's initiative as direct interference in Australia's internal affairs. In fact, the way he described his contempt for Layton ('I hit the roof and sent for him at the Stock Exchange') clearly expressed his dismay at the audacity of Layton's initiative.[51] His remark that this could have only happened because 'they [British Jews] held the purse' also indicates his disapproval of the Jewish reliance on matters of finance as a persuasive tool.[52] What is obvious is the condescending attitude Garrett adopted towards Jewish people, a characteristic that became more evident when he considered the predicament of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe.

Garrett's report as presented by Bartrop and evident from archival material available at the National Archives of Australia makes for interesting reading. Since Australia did not have its own diplomatic representation on the Continent at the time of his tour of European capitals, he was dependent on information provided by British passport control officers stationed at their respective legations. His review of the position of Jewish refugees who found temporary asylum in Switzerland, Belgium, France and The Netherlands was factual and straightforward. Information received there was that not many would be interested in immigrating to Australia, although authorities in those countries claimed that the refugees in fact desired to emigrate overseas. Garrett was particularly impressed by the way Dutch authorities took care of Jewish refugees who were provided with assistance in training for employment in agriculture once they arrived in The Netherlands. Of particular interest is the impact made on Garrett by

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[50] See Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 32, 33.

[51] NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[52] Ibid.

Captain Loewe, whom he praised for his efficiency. Loewe was Jewish and in Garrett's opinion had a 'Jewish outlook'.[53] In contrast, Garrett's appraisal of the Jewish populations of Rumania, Hungary and Poland did not bode well for individuals who hoped to immigrate to Australia.[54] As far as the situation in which Jews from Germany and Austria found themselves, Bartrop is sceptical about Garrett's ability or willingness to correctly evaluate the urgency of their situation. This is in spite of the threat that the Gestapo posed to the work of Jewish refugee organizations in Germany and Austria, to which Garrett's attention was drawn and which he acknowledged.[55]

What information then is available on Garrett's attitude towards the admission of Jewish refugees from Czecho-Slovakia? There was an exchange of correspondence between Margaret Layton of the BCRC, Julian Layton's sister, and Constance Duncan from the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council in Melbourne, on the basis of which Layton arranged a meeting with Garrett immediately after his arrival in London. According to the letter, dated 14 June 1939, Garrett suggested to Margaret Layton that the BCRC should process all applications from Jews, Protestants and Catholics first and then dispatch these applications to Australia. Attempts to find out from Garrett what professions were most in demand in Australia were not very successful and Margaret Layton therefore turned to Constance Duncan with a request to supply a list of employment openings in Australia. Garrett instantly rejected Layton's suggestion regarding the establishment of a refugee settlement for Czechoslovak Jews in Australia. However, in her reply to Layton on 30 June 1939, Duncan wrote that she was glad that Layton had the opportunity to consult with Garrett.

Having been informed that the BCRC was also caring for Jewish refugees, Duncan claimed that her organization in Australia was involved with the care of non-Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia who in their majority were Catholics. Duncan's statement does not reflect the attitude she expressed in her letter to Lyons on 16 November 1938 in which she declared on behalf of the Australian League of Nations Union (Victorian Branch) that her organization was striving to establish a Federal Council that would work 'for all types of refugees – Jews, non-Aryans and refugees from Czechoslovakia'.[56]

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[53] NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[54] Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*, 165.

[55] Ibid. 165–166. See also NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

In answer to Margaret Layton's inquiry on Australia's immigration policy, Duncan attached an extract from a letter written by Carrodus on 16 June 1939, which summarized the situation. Regarding employment possibilities in Australia, Duncan informed Layton that all skilled artisans were in demand, in particular engineers, people with farming experience and domestic workers. She added that medical practitioners, solicitors and businesspeople were certain to experience difficulties when seeking employment.[57]

In order to facilitate the immigration process for prospective applicants, the BCRC issued a letter in German providing information to prospective immigrants to Australia on how to apply for a landing permit so that German-speaking refugees from Czechoslovakia would be able to complete immigration forms and supply all required documents.[58]

Colonel Harold Cohen, the military attaché at the High Commission in London also became involved with the Czech refugee problem after having been contacted by the BCRC. Following his conversation with one of its members, Cohen spoke about the immigration situation in Australia. Drawing attention to the fact that Italian and Greek settlers had not been well received, Cohen assured the BCRC activists that experienced migrants from Central Europe were highly praised and sought after because of their skills. Of importance is his comment:

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[56] NAA A981, CZE 22, Part 1, 'Czechoslovakia-Germany, Miscellaneous Resolutions Part I', Item 174723. Interestingly, *The Portland Guardian* published a lengthy report on the activities of the Victorian Emergency Council on 28 August 1939, in which it praised the efforts of the Council to bring refugees of all racial origins to Australia while emphasizing the positive contributions of the refugees for Australia's benefit.

[57] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950', 121–13 P1020351. Letter from Constance Duncan to Margaret Layton, 30 June 1939.

[58] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. Information and instructions from the BCRC to prospective immigrants to Australia written in the German language. Not dated.

> [...] it is particularly important that the emigrants selected for Australia should be of a socially desirable type and easily assimilable to the life of the country. The further growth of antisemitism can only be avoided by an extremely careful selection at this end. The responsibility for this rests largely with the refugee committees here.[59]

Of further significance are Cohen's remarks that it was of utmost importance to select trades that were in demand in Australia. He admitted that Australia House did not disseminate information on the employment situation, however, he stated that it was possible to get acquainted with it through private contacts. Furthermore, Cohen reported on training camps for agricultural workers set up in Australia and indicated that Tasmania would be the place to look for work, given the shortage of experienced farm workers. He also drew attention to the fact that hops had been imported from Czechoslovakia.[60]

On 3 June 1939, Cohen contacted George Peacock, a Tasmanian businessman, with a request to assist Helen Stevenson, a friend of his daughter and an associate of the BCRC. Stevenson was interested in exploring employment opportunities in agriculture for refugees from Czechoslovakia. In his letter to Peacock, Cohen emphasized that Czech refugees were highly skilled technicians and a good type of people, both Jews and Christians. He ended his letter with the words: 'if there is anything you could do to advise these people, I shall be obliged'.[61]

It is not known whether Cohen had the opportunity to consult with Garrett during the latter's stay at the High Commission and provide him with information on his contact with the BCRC. What is known is that Garrett met with Dr Wilhelm Wanka, the leader of the Sudeten German refugees who gathered in London and were likewise interested in finding new homes overseas. Given the Australian government's interest in admitting non-Jewish Sudeten German refugees, Wanka, during his meeting with Garrett on 11 July 1939, presented a detailed memorandum on their situation, the financial arrangements available for their admission to Australia, and a review of their professional skills. What Wanka was alluding to was the possibility of a Sudeten German group settlement on the Craigilands Estate north of Perth.[62] However, following an exchange of correspondence between Garrett, Carrodus and the West Australian Premier, the idea was rejected. The land at Craigilands was of poor quality, unsuitable for developing agriculture. Perhaps more importantly, the Australian government was not in favour of creating separate enclaves for foreign nationals.[63]

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[59] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. See also Frey, 'Memo: Emigration to Australia', not dated.

[60] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'.

[61] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. George Peacock was a producer of jams. His products were later traded under the IXL logo.

In order to gain first-hand exposure to the refugee problem in the Protectorate, it was important for Garrett to travel to Prague, where he arrived on 15 July 1939. Compared to reports that he wrote on his impressions on the situation of Jews in other European capitals, his report from Prague was more comprehensive. He had the opportunity to speak with both the British passport control officer in Prague Captain V. C. Farrell and with Walter Creighton, Stopford's deputy, who represented the Coordinating Committee in London, charged with the selection of the 'right type' of refugees for resettlement. In his report, Garrett mentioned the financial gift granted to refugees from Czechoslovakia by the British government and the role of Stopford, the British Treasury's official, responsible for its administration. Garrett was thus informed that refugees were entitled to £200 plus travelling expenses after having obtained their immigration visas.

Farrell informed Garrett that he did not object to cooperating with the Commonwealth government but he was not interested in vetting applicants. At the same time he drew Garrett's attention to possible problems with regard to the unreliability of the police and his doubts about the veracity of medical certificates.[64] Creighton provided Garret with more detail on emigration processes, which were at that time determined by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care. Importantly, in Creighton's opinion, only Jews would in the future be permitted to emigrate while Aryans would not. Sudeten Germans, according to Creighton, were currently being enticed to return to their homes. Creighton, who was willing to vet Jewish applicants for admission to Australia, was certain that they were a good type and provided that they would be given permission from the Gestapo to emigrate (through the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care), would make good colonists. At the end of his interview, Garrett was told that any correspondence to himself should be addressed to c/o British passport control officer, to which Farrell voiced no objection.[65]

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[62] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950', 121–12 P1020352 and 121-P1020352352. The suggestion of establishing a group settlement in Craigilands was also mentioned by Constance Duncan in her letter to Margaret Layton, 20 June 1939.

[63] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

It is important to note that before Garrett left London, the Czech Protectorate government received an order from Reichsprotektor Constantin von Neurath on 21 June to introduce the Nuremberg Laws in Bohemia and Moravia which had the same devastating effect on Czech Jews as they had had on those in Germany and Austria.[66] On 22 June von Neurath issued decrees, according to which Jews were no longer able to buy real estate, to participate in commercial enterprises, to acquire shares or to float businesses. All gold, silver and jewels were to be deposited with the National Bank.[67] Moreover, on 15 July 1939, the day Garrett arrived in Prague, SS Oberführer Walther Stahlecker took charge of the newly created 'Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung' – the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague (Zentralstelle). His second in charge was Adolf Eichmann who was recalled from Vienna where he had established the same office.[68] It is not known whether Garrett was informed about this event, as this information was not included in his report from Prague.

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[64] Farrell was determined to prevent Jewish emigration to Britain in spite of being aware of the fact that 'antisemitic measures would soon exclude Jews from earning a living'. See London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948*, 134–135.

[65] NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[66] Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940', 11–29.

[67] 'Business Ban on Jews', *The Mercury* (23 June 1939).

Garrett's visit to Prague was followed by a visit to Vienna and then to Bratislava, where he arrived on 18 July 1939.[69] The situation in Bratislava was different to that in Prague and the outcome of his meeting with the British passport control officer, Doran in the Slovak capital was not very encouraging. Although Doran was not against vetting possible applicants, he was sceptical about their suitability for emigration to Australia. Walking with Doran through the Jewish quarter of Bratislava, Garrett remarked that its inhabitants were better than those in Warsaw, but still 'a very poor type'.[70] As was the case in Prague, Doran informed Garrett that medical certificates produced by Jews interested in emigrating could not be relied upon.[71]

Given the situation of Czech and Slovak Jews and Sudeten German opponents to Hitler's regime, what then were their prospects of finding support from British sources after their country ceased to exist? The reality was that the steady increase in the number of people leaving the former Czecho-Slovakia brought about a depletion of funds set aside for them to emigrate. The British loan granted to Czecho-Slovakia in January 1939 had now been blocked as a result of the German invasion, and therefore it became necessary to consider making available additional funds for the maintenance of the remaining potential refugees.[72]

This required not only new legislation but also the involvement of the Home Office, which was charged with the careful selection of genuine refugees. In addition, German financial authorities took it upon themselves to make decisions regarding the distribution of funds to potential emigrants still remaining in the Protectorate. In view of the complexity of the situation, a decision was reached to establish the Czech Refugee Trust Fund (CRTF) in July 1939 which would become the umbrella organization for the distribution of funds designated to assist all refugees from Czechoslovakia, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, legal or illegal.[73] Importantly, the CRTF was directly involved with processing procedures relating to the transfer of capital and funds of potential emigrants through the Anglo-Czech and Živnostenská Banks in the Protectorate, as well as with the distribution of monies provided by the British grant, in collaboration with the Ministry for Social Welfare and Health Care in Prague. The organization became operational during Garrett's visit to Europe.

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[68] Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940', 11–29.

[69] Bartrop refers only briefly to the outcome of Garrett's visits to Prague and Bratislava.

[70] Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust, 1939–1945*, 165 and NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[71] NAA A659, 1947/1/2109, 'Reports and Proposals by Garrett T. H. – Refugees from Europe – Selection etc. (1939)', Item 635912.

[72] London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948*, 166.

H. Verschoyle, who was previously attached to the BCRC, was appointed as liaison officer of the Emigration Department of the CRTF, responsible for supporting the emigration of Czechoslovak refugees to Australia. In her letter to Sir Henry Bunbury, the Director of the CRTF, dated 19 July 1939, she raised concerns over Question 11 of the application form, which stipulated that the applicant must indicate the maximum amount of money they could bring to Australia. The problem, Verschoyle wrote, was that most refugees were destitute and reliant on the A£200 that they were entitled to from the Trust. At the end of her letter she wrote: 'I understand from Garrett at Australia House that they do not mind whether the money is borrowed or not'.[74] It was obvious from her following letter written on 21 July 1939 that a decision by Sir Henry Bunbury would have to be made soon due to the fact that a number of applications for admission to Australia were held up at her office.[75] The same letter was also sent to Garrett. In his answer to Verschoyle he assured her that according to requirements stipulated in Form 47 A£200 would be sufficient for obtaining a landing permit. Should an applicant be sponsored by an individual or an organization, then A£50 would be accepted, provided that the migrant was guaranteed employment for a period of five years.[76]

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[73] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, 'Podpora vystěhovalců, vývoz valut, všeobecně', R 442. See also Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část 1', 35–36 and Velecká, 'Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace do vypuknutí války v roce 1939', 685–691.

[74] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. Letter from H. Verschoyle to Sir Henry Bunbury, 19 July 1939.

[75] Ibid.

Both Garrett's letter to Verschoyle and the summary of his study trip to Europe, which he dispatched to Carrodus, were dated 28 August 1939. Four days later the Second World War began. As the editor of the *SMH* noted in March 1939, the 'cost of Munich was still undetermined'.[77] The outbreak of the war on 1 September 1939 clearly indicates that the result of Munich not only affected the rest of Europe but rather the whole world. The doors to possible Jewish refugee emigration were closing.

In a letter to Verschoyle, dated 17 October 1939, Major Reuben H. Wheeler, the Chief Immigration Officer at Australia's High Commission in London, informed her: 'for the time being no authority is being given to Czech nationals to proceed to Australia'.[78] At that time, however, the situation of Jews in the Protectorate became critical. The Central Office for Jewish Emigration, set up by the Germans, issued an order that applications for emigration of 200 Jews must be handed in every day.[79] While Garrett did not report on this important development *The Singleton Argus* did. Quoting a source in The Hague, the paper published the news on 14 August 1939, the day before Garrett arrived in Prague. It read as follows:

> The Gestapo has ordered the expulsion of the entire Jewish population from the Reich Protectorate at the rate of 200 a day. They must go to Prague where a committee will arrange for their deportation.[80]

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[76] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. Letter from Garrett to Verschoyle, 28 August 1939.

[77] 'Epilogue to Munich' *SMH* (16 March 1939).

[78] NA UK, HO 294/121, 'Emigration to Australia 1939–1950'. Letter from R. H. Wheeler to H. Verschoyle, 17 October 1939.

[79] Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940', 22.

[80] '60,000 Jews must leave, Gestapo gives order', *The Singleton Argus* (14 August 1939).

While Czechoslovak refugees who succeeded in securing a landing permit, were able to reach the safety of Australia, inevitably the work of the refugee organizations suffered as a result of developments on the international scene.

Given the situation of Czech Jews was life threatening, their survival was dependent on being able to emigrate. Both the BCRC and the CRTF were instrumental in providing support to many Czechoslovak refugees, organizing admission to countries worldwide, including Australia. However, the work of both organizations suffered as a result of developments on the international scene, internal policy changes and subsequent government interventions. Nonetheless, during 1938 and 1939 and the years that followed, Czechoslovak refugees, who were fortunate enough to secure a landing permit were able to embark on a voyage to Australia.

CHAPTER 8

Emigration

> My parents decided to immigrate to Australia, because it was as far away from Europe as possible.
>
> — DOROTHY KEIRS (TUGEN), Melbourne, April 2012

These are the words of a refugee from Czechoslovakia who, at the age of nine, succeeded in reaching Australia with her family in February 1940.[1] Like many others who arrived on Australian shores, their concern about the future was sufficient to loosen the ties that bound them to their former lives. Having hurriedly packed a suitcase or a backpack, sometimes at the shortest possible notice, they said goodbye to their loved ones who waved to them from the landings of their houses. In most cases that was the last time they saw each other.[2] They hastened to catch the first or the last train to take them as far as possible from the dangerous situation they found themselves in, often bribing an official or a guard on border crossings, grasping a helping hand, or reaching out to help others. These are the stories of people who were escaping a catastrophe.

Behind them were months of anxiety, caused by difficult, life-altering decisions that had to be made and of bureaucratic obstacles to be overcome.

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[1] Dorothy Kiers was the adopted daughter of Robert George Tugendhat (Tugen), whose refugee story will form part of the final chapter.

[2] Hedvika Novotná 'Židé vzpomínají na druhou republiku. Obraz druhé republiky v memoárech židovských autorů z českých zemí' (Jews remember the Second Republic: Life in the Second Republic as described by Jewish authors in the Czech Lands), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina za druhé republiky* (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2007), 158.

Moreover, the circumstances that led them to abandon their families, their social environment, possessions and professional careers lay heavily on their minds. To date the accounts of events leading to the emigration of Czechoslovak Jews to Australia prior to and after the outbreak of the Second World War, and their refugee stories, have remained untold.

During 1938 and 1939 emigration of Czech and Slovak Jews was not only encouraged but pressure was exerted to enforce it. The treatment of applicants by local or German bureaucrats after March 1939 was frequently abusive. Unable to defend themselves, or avail themselves of legal assistance, Jews were humiliated and often physically assaulted when submitting their applications for emigration.[3] Further, the cancellation of valid landing permits as of 1 April 1939 caused anguish to those who were hoping to leave for Australia in the shortest possible time. Landing permits then had to be re-applied for at the Australian High Commission in London. Refugees in possession of valid Czechoslovak passports or travel documents issued by the Czecho-Slovak government to exiles, were able to leave the country, provided that bureaucratic requirements were complied with, transit and immigration visas were stamped into their passports, provision of funds for relocation abroad had been authorized, and travel arrangements had been finalized.

As of July 1939, the SS was put in charge of the newly established Zentralstelle to systemize the expulsion of Jews: submission of application forms for emigration, proof of place of residence, police certificates confirming good conduct, applications for the issue of passports, certificates confirming the payment of municipal taxes and the Reichsfluchtsteuer,[4] customs fees, and the processing of other unspecified documents in fulfilment of emigration requirements. Protectorate passports would then be issued, because those previously issued by the Czechoslovak or Czecho-Slovak authorities were no longer considered valid.[5] All documents and luggage had to be presented for inspection to SS guards at railway stations and border crossings.[6] Moreover, it was obligatory to report that people who were in receipt of refugee grants had left the country.[7]

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[3] Černý, 'Emigrace Židů z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941', 55–71.

[4] Die Reichfluchtsteuer was a special tax that was imposed on Jews, which they were required to settle prior to leaving the country.

[5] NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5001, 'Cestovní pasy, tiskopisy'.

While German officials of the Zentralstelle were keen to impress their Czech subordinates with experience gained in the process of organizing Jewish emigration in Berlin and in Vienna, they admitted that the most important aspect towards the expulsion of Jews – the stamping of immigration visas in their passports – was beyond their control. The challenge to secure visas was, therefore, the biggest impediment to the successful outcome of the emigration process.[8]

On 4 August 1939 the Zentralstelle reported that between 300 and 350 application forms were received daily from Jews wishing to leave the country.[9] On 1 September 1939 a statement was issued that the activities of the Zentralstelle were suspended and that the task of processing applications for the emigration of Jews was to be taken over by the Jewish community and the Palestine Office in Prague.[10] However, a further communication, issued on 11 September 1939 to State Regional Offices in Prague and Brno, announced that Eichmann had issued an order for the Zentralstelle to be re-activated.

Additional confusion followed when another order was issued on 3 January 1940 by the Zentralstelle to the effect that processing of applications for Jewish emigration would resume on 3 January 1940. By that date Protectorate passports had already been declared invalid and refugees had to apply for German passports. While the highest number of applications for emigration was recorded in August 1939, by the beginning of 1940 the number of applications had fallen significantly.[11] In spite of this, the number of refugees who applied for permission to emigrate and whose applications were processed by the Zentralstelle reached 11,038 towards the end of 1940: 7,420 German passports were issued, as well as 1,252 'foreign' passports and an existing 1,353 passports were validated.[12]

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[6] NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5000 and Karton 5001.

[7] NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, 'Stará registratura MV I-SR D1321', letter 28 July 1939, 'Ústředí pro vystěhovalectví Židů'.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid. Letter sent to the Presidium of the Ministry of the Interior, 4 August 1939.

[10] Ibid. See letter sent by the Prague Regional Office to the Zentralstelle on 1 September 1939.

Adding to the complexity of the procedures to which Jewish emigrants were subjected in order to obtain passports and travel documents, another obstacle arose when the Hungarian Consulate in Prague issued a statement that Hungarian transit visas would no longer be issued to Jewish refugees. One month later the Zentralstelle reported to the Ministry of the Interior that some Slovak Jews in possession of Slovak passports, who initially planned to emigrate, had decided to return to Slovakia. Slovak Jews, as well as those from Subcarpathian Ruthenia and Galicia were considered to be particularly undesirable. For this reason, the Ministry of the Interior forwarded a request to the Reichsprotektor, urging the chief of the Gestapo to make sure that Jews from these areas were the first to be expelled.[13] With Hungarian territory out of bounds to Slovak and Subcarpathian Hungarian-speaking Jewish refugees an important route had been closed. At this time a special department had been established within the Jewish community to enable non-Aryan Christians to emigrate. Due to the fact that these persons were barred from immigrating to Palestine, the Ministry of the Interior was urged to appeal to Catholic and other Christian organizations to assist in securing their admission to other countries, in particular South American countries.[14]

Despite animosity towards them on the part of Polish authorities, many refugees decided to escape to Poland prior to the outbreak of the war. People smugglers guided them through mountain passes in dangerous conditions. Once in Poland, refugees gathered in the towns of Katowice and Krakow where they besieged British consulates with requests for permissions to emigrate to Britain. According to Louise London, Britain gave preference to the admission of Hitler's Sudeten German opponents because they were considered political refugees, whereas the situation of Jewish refugees, who were victims of racial persecution, was not considered critical.[15]

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[11] Ibid. Letter from the Zentralstelle to the Ministry of the Interior, 11 January 1940.

[12] Ibid. Letter, 7 January 1941.

[13] Ibid. Letter, 14 April 1940.

[14] Ibid. Letter from the Zentralstelle to the Ministry of the Interior, 19 April 1940.

Pressure exerted by German and Czech Protectorate authorities to enforce emigration further exacerbated the distress. The realization that every avenue had to be explored in order to escape the danger which was increasing in intensity every day was on everybody's mind.[16] Having settled their affairs at the Zentralstelle, packed their belongings, had their passports stamped with immigration and transit visas, their railway and boat tickets safe in their wallets, their diplomas in their briefcases and foreign language dictionaries at hand, the refugees joined one of history's greatest population movements taking place in Europe.[17]

Escape Routes

As early as December 1938 the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care of the Czecho-Slovak government issued directives to the office of the Cunard White Star shipping company in Prague for the transport of emigrants from Czecho-Slovakia to the ports of Gdynia, Bremen, Hamburg, Hoek van Holland, Rotterdam, Ostende, Le Havre, Cherbourg, London, Liverpool and Southampton. Shipping lanes leading to Australia were set as follows: Route A: Liverpool, Cape Town, Albany, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Route B: from Gdynia by the United Baltic Corporation and the Polish-British Steamship Company to European ports mentioned above, followed by transfer to ocean liners departing from British ports to the United States, Canada and Australia. It was the Czech travel agency

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[15] London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948*, 147–149.

[16] Ruth Bondy, 'Kronika zavírajících se bran' (The chronicle of gates shutting), *Terezínské Studie a Dokumenty* (2001), 11–25.

[17] Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940', 55–71.

ČEDOK and the British travel agency Thomas Cook that were predominantly involved in organizing the refugees' passage overland and by sea. Railway lines that led to France, The Netherlands and Belgium, as well as those leading to Poland, followed by ferry to Sweden and Norway, were likewise outlined with prices for the purchase of railway tickets included.[18]

However, there were many other routes that refugees took after the outbreak of the war that did not follow the above-mentioned rail and shipping lanes. A total of sixty-eight ships, including those crossing the Pacific Ocean, carried Czechoslovak refugees to Australia. They belonged to British, Italian, Dutch, North American, Australian, Canadian, French, Chinese and Japanese lines.[19] In a letter issued by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care, Dr Vlasatý informed the Ministry of the Interior that a decision had been reached on 31 December 1939 to the effect that the Cunard White shipping company would cease providing passage to emigrants as of 1 January 1940.[20] Likewise, as of 30 January 1940, the Hamburg–South American shipping company ceased transporting refugees.[21] In contrast, the Italo-Cogulich Trieste shipping line advertised that their routes led to Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Many refugees from Czecho-Slovakia began their journey to Australia on ships that sailed from Italian ports. In December 1939, ninety-three Jewish refugees left the Protectorate and travelled on the company's ships worldwide, mostly to countries on the American continents. Amongst them were several passengers who were heading for Australia.[22]

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[18] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, MPSP-R351 R 422, letter to Dr C. Šlapák, 12 January 1939 and to Dr Klumpák, undated.

[19] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, MPSP-R351 R 422. NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, 'Ústav pro péči o uprchlíky'. 'Udělování povolení k dopravě vystěhovalců z ČSR, respective z Protektorátu Čech a Moravy, respektive firmám Cunnard White Star Limited. D-1321'. Vessels arriving in Australia are recorded on my database of Czechoslovak refugees in Australia 1937–1944.

[20] Ibid. Karton 5006. Letter from the Zentralstelle, 11 January 1940.

[21] Ibid. Karton 5006. Letter sent to Hamburg-South American shipping company from the Ministry of Social Welfare and Health Care, 9 December 1939. Interestingly, this decision was later rescinded in November 1940 and the shipping company was again given permission to transport refugees.

In their rush to leave wartime Europe, emigrants were eager to book their places on any ship that still had cabins on offer. According to the Zentralstelle 131 Jewish refugees sailed from Europe to countries overseas on ships owned by Lloyd Triestino, while two refugees sailed on American lines during April and the first half of May 1940. At the same time the Zentralstelle revealed that the Jewish community was working tirelessly to arrange emigration for refugees, in spite of the fact that it had become almost impossible to book a voyage on a ship in wartime.[23]

A decision was then taken by the Jewish community's activists to organize an overland route through Asia to South and North America: from Prague through Warsaw, Lithuania to Moscow, then with the Trans-Siberian railway to the Far East of the Soviet Union towards Japanese-occupied Manchuria. The Far Eastern port of Vladivostok, originally designated as the port of embarkation for Japan, was allegedly later considered less suitable. Nevertheless, it was possible to travel by land to Harbin and Mukden and then proceed to Yokohama and Kobe. Both Harbin and Mugden are situated in what was Japanese-occupied Manchuria. Once in Japan, it was hoped that one could continue to other destinations. Travel by rail to the Far East via the Soviet Union was estimated to last fifteen to sixteen days, with meals provided on the train.[24]

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[22] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158.

[23] Milotová, 'Ústředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940', 55–71.

[24] NA, P, Ministerstvo vnitra, Nová Registratura, 1075/3, MV I-NR Karton 5006, SR D1319 – 'Central Office for Jewish Emigration', letter to the Presidium of the Department of the Interior, Prague, 19 June 1940. The changed route through the USSR to Japan was then indicated in a letter dated 1 August 1940. See also NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5000, MV-SR-4441, D1200, D1321, 'Cestovní pasy, Průkaz o zaplacení daní'; NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, SR D-1321; AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 526, Oddíl 4, Londýnský Archiv (LA) Regal 70, 'Vystěhovalectví – Evakuace z Japonska'; and Bondy, 'Kronika zavírajících se bran', 22.

Heumos confirms that Jews were able to travel through the Soviet Union to the Far East, but indicates a slightly different route, passing through Omsk and then continuing to the Japanese ports of Shimonoseki and Kobe. His assertion was based on correspondence between the Home and Foreign Offices, regarding Czech refugees in Japan, in which E. N. Cooper wrote: 'I understand that these refugees have reached Japan by stages from Czechoslovakia via Poland, Lithuania and U.S.S.R.'[25] A letter dated 1 August 1940 indicates that the Soviet consulate in Prague issued guarantees that it would provide transit visas for refugees travelling through its territory.[26] It is difficult to determine the number of Czechoslovak Jews who succeeded in reaching Japan via the Soviet Union[27] and their final destination after they had been evacuated from Japan. Although none of the thirty-seven refugees named in the cable sent to the Czechoslovak Consulate in New York arrived in Australia, there were other refugees who arrived in Australia via Japan. Moreover, according to my database, some refugees succeeded in reaching Australia via Harbin, Shanghai and Hong Kong during the war, although it is not possible to establish whether they did so by travelling via the Soviet Union. Other evidence, based on registration papers housed at the NAA and recorded on my database, suggests refugees arrived in Australia via Casablanca, Istanbul, Bombay, Calcutta, Malaya, Singapore, Java and Sumatra, following the entry of Japan into the war.

There were also refugees who first travelled to the east coast of North America and then continued to Australia via Vancouver and San Francisco. It was possible to establish that Dr Isidor Huppert and his family arrived from the United States in 1940, not because it was written where he came from on the family's registration papers, but because they arrived on the

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[25] Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 40. Dokumentation, 380. Correspondence between E. N. Cooper and R. T. Latham, 3 June 1941.

[26] NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, SR-D1319, letter to the Presidium of the Department of the Interior, Prague, 1 August 1940.

[27] AŮTGM, EB/II sign. V 79/3, 'Británie, Dokumenty a Zprávy'. The correspondence deals primarily with the situation of refugees stranded in Singapore and Japan, as well as pleas from the refugees to the Czechoslovak government in London for assistance towards evacuation to safety.

Aorangi, a ship that sailed across the Pacific Ocean. With support from the CRTF, this family began their trip to Australia from Europe, crossed the Atlantic, then travelled overland to the west coast of North America before finally arriving on the east coast of Australia.[28]

The majority of refugees who set sail for Australia arrived between 1938 and 1940. In 1941 and 1942 the number of arrivals of Czechoslovak Jews decreased. Those who arrived during that period came mainly from countries in Asia and North America. This was made possible because neither Australia nor the United States were at war with Japan at that time. However, there were some exceptions. Josef Senfeld, who was born in Prague and received both his Czechoslovak passport and Australian landing permit in Washington DC, arrived in Australia as late as 1944. Other refugees came from Palestine, Egypt, Ceylon and Cuba.[29]

Refugees who were supported by the CRTF and were provided with the sum of A£200 had their travelling expenditures included in the grant. Based on the bank records of Czechoslovak banks, housed at the National Archives in Prague,[30] it is possible to examine the process of financing an emigrant's voyage overseas. Under strict guidelines set for organizing the refugees' transport to the port of destination, travel agencies and shipping companies were instructed to forward their invoices to the Živnostenská Bank. With invoices forwarded by travel agencies and the transfer of funds of refugees approved, the bank guaranteed that the payment of fares would be honoured. This arrangement concerned only people with insufficient funds who were eligible for the A£200 granted to them by the CRTF.

The records of the National Archives, Prague show the amount of capital that people bound for Australia were permitted to withdraw. Sums permitted for transfer varied *c*onsiderably, depending on the financial situation of individual refugees and the particular routes they took to reach

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, R 422, 'Ústav pro péči o uprchlíky, při ministervu sociální a zdravotní správy – Podpora vystěhovalců, vývoz valut – všeobecně'.

Australia.[31] Apart from the Živnostenská Bank, the Anglo-Prague Bank was likewise involved with remitting funds for refugees to various countries, including Australia.[32]

Most refugees sailed from European ports. In the course of their long journey to Australia, experiences were exchanged amongst fellow travellers, information that was available was passed on and lifelong friendships were formed. With hardships of the recent past behind them, a common feeling of uneasiness about the future in an unfamiliar environment set in. However, with the first sighting of the Australian continent on the horizon, curiosity often took over together with a sense of relief that their goal had been achieved. They were safe and beyond reach of the ever-increasing danger to their lives in the faraway country they used to call home.

Those who managed to leave in time were fortunate. A letter sent by the police department of the Zentralstelle on 2 October 1941 informed the Ministry of the Interior that, by order of the administration of the Zentralstelle, passports were no longer to be issued to Jewish applicants for emigration. Instead, an order for registration of all Jews throughout the Protectorate, including all people who were registered as residing in their households, was to be enforced. A card index was to be established and Jews were to be placed under direct control of the police.[33] This effectively put an end to emigration from the Protectorate although Czechoslovak Jews continued to arrive in Australia from other parts of the world during the war.

The information on individual refugees that forms my database was gathered from archival material available at the National Archives of Australia and the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. My database provides not only information on the number of arrivals and claims to Czechoslovak citizenship, but also links to other issues. As of 2007, I had become committed to building a database from these archival sources which in turn became the blueprint that formed the basis of the refugee story. My database includes the names of the refugees, their date and place of birth, the date and place of issue of their passports or travel documents, ports of embarkation, the vessel with which they arrived in Australia, the port of disembarkation, the date of arrival, their professional qualifications and in some cases their addresses in Australia. Importantly, refugees whose immigration was sponsored by the CRTF, by individual sponsors and by the AJWS have also been marked on my database, as well as immigrants who joined the Australian armed forces following the outbreak of the war.

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[31] Ibid.

[32] NA UK, HO 94/107, Anglo-Prague Bank 1939.

[33] NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, 'Zprávy o činnosti Ústředí pro vystěhování Židů', letter dated 13 October 1941.

It is important to realize that there was no information available on the number of Jewish immigrants from Czechoslovakia to Australia in the critical years of 1938–1939 and following the outbreak of the war. Thus, the period registered on my database, during which refugees continued to arrive in Australia is significant. Many refugees reached Australia during the time when military operations on ground, air and sea were taking place, indicating that war did not deter them from undertaking the journey. Once they were out of European waters and before the theatre of war expanded to the Middle East and the Pacific region, the passengers' safety was relatively assured.

The late Czech historian Bohumil Černý estimates that 176 Jews immigrated to Australia in the period from 15 March 1939 to 15 July 1943. However, what is of particular significance is the information Černý provides on the number of applications submitted for immigration to Australia at the Zentralstelle in Prague. According to Černý there were twenty-six applicants to the Zentralstelle in Prague. Of these, some thirteen applicants did not succeed in their efforts to immigrate to Australia and were transported to concentration camps during the war. Of this number ten perished and only three survived. Whether the three survivors and the other thirteen applicants succeeded in reaching Australia or any other country, remains unknown.[34] Heumos's statistics on Jewish emigration from the Protectorate are in line with those of Černý. Heumos also indicates that 176 immigrants arrived in Australia.[35] Interestingly, according to records available at the National Archives, Prague, only a total of 153 refugees migrated to Australia.[36] In contrast, estimates of the number of Jewish refugees who came to Australia from Czechoslovakia from 1938 to 1942 are between 200 and 250. Based on my research in the archives the figure appears to be significantly higher: I have located 1153 names.

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[34] Černý, 'Emigrace', *Židů z Českých zemí v letech 1938–1941*, 55–71.

[35] Heumos bases his figures on information provided by the Jewish Community of Prague, on the study of Hans Günther, *Theresienstadt 1941–1945: Das Antlitz einer*

There is not much information available on Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia who were refused admission to Australia and whatever information there is, is sketchy and incomplete. Three cases, however, have been documented. The first one concerned an applicant from Bratislava who sent a letter to Dr Fanny Reading, the President of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, in which he appealed for help. He was a manufacturer of sacks and was anxious to obtain a landing permit to immigrate to Australia. In spite of the fact that he was in possession of £1,000 and he indicated that he would be able to provide employment to twenty-five workers, Dr Reading's request for admission of the applicant was rejected, first by Edwin Abbott, the Comptroller General and then by Carrodus, the Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior.[37] The name of this applicant was never mentioned in the correspondence, nor was it registered in the archives of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia. His fate remains unknown. The second case concerns the fate of the sister of the late Francis Lord, whose circumstances are discussed in Chapter 10. The third is the case concerning Rabbi Hugo Stránský who was serving the Jewish com-

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Zwangsgemeinschaft (*Theresienstadt 1941–1945: The Image of a Coerced Community*) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1955) and Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris, vol. DXXI, no. 1992.

[36] NA, P, Ministerstvo sociální péče – repatriace, 1146, MPSR-R, Karton 158, 'Zpráva o vystěhovalecké agendě Ústavu pro péči o vystěhovalce', 8. NA, P Ministerstvo Vnitra I, Nová registratura, 1936–1953, 1075/3, Karton 5006, D-1319, 'Zprávy o činnosti Ústředí pro vystěhování Židů'. On the activities of the Zentralstelle see also Milotová, 'Ůstředna pro židovské vystěhovalectví v Praze, Geneze a činnost do počátku roku 1940'.

[37] NAA A433, 1939, 'The National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, Item 74082. Letters from Dr Fanniy Reading dated 15 March 1939 and refusals sent by the Comptroller General E. Abbott on 18 May 1939 and J. A. Carrodus, Secretary of the Minister for the Interior on 16 June 1939.

munity in the Slovak town of Žilina. Rabbi Stránský requested Rabbi Leib Aisack Falk of the Great Synagogue in Sydney to provide assistance for his admission to Australia. In spite of being supported by his congregants who lived in Sydney, Rabbi Stránský was not admitted to Australia although he managed to find refuge in Britain.

There were others who desperately tried to come to Australia but did not succeed. Eugen Lax, a student at the University of Lausanne, could not study medicine in Slovakia because he was a Jew. Lax wrote an emotional letter to Rabbi Falk, in which he implored him to do everything possible to enable him to immigrate to Australia.[38] Evžen Schwimmer, a thirty-year-old teacher of scripture and assistant rabbi to the congregation in the Czech town of Nový Bydžov, was likewise anxious to immigrate to Australia. In his letter to the head of the Jewish community in Sydney he wrote that he would be grateful for any job that would be available. He stressed: 'In these fateful days, Jews worldwide belong together in their hour of need'.[39] Dr Artur Hartmann, the head of the gynaecology and obstetrics department of the hospital at Slatinské Doly, sent a letter to Wills & Rogers, Medical Agents, Sydney, on 10 December 1938, requesting their assistance to enable him to immigrate.[40] Given, that no registration papers could be found in the National Archives of Australia for Lax Schwimmer and Dr Hartmann it is probable that they did not ever reach Australia.

The most unusual case was the exclusion of Miloslawa Sadilek and her son Julius. Born in Pilsen, her family moved to Berlin in the 1920s. The two applicants were not granted a landing permit because Sadilek's brother and guarantor, Richard Augustine, joined an NSDAP branch in South Australia. When the Nazi organization discovered that Augustine's mother was Jewish, he was immediately expelled. Due to his 'extremely pro-German sympathies' Sadilek's sister and nephew, who were anxious to leave Berlin in 1939, were denied an Australian landing permit.[41] It is more than likely that there were many more Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia whose applications were not approved but the cases discussed above provide specific examples of Czech and Slovak Jews who tried to escape to Australia.

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[38] Australian Jewish Historical Society. Letter from Eugen Lax, 21 March 1939.

[39] Ibid. Letter from Evžen Schwimmer, 9 May 1939.

[40] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547.

[41] NAA A4355, 1946/4/3279, 'Richard Sadilek', Item 6939835.

Verifying the identity of refugees from Czechoslovakia is particularly problematic. This issue is closely related to citizenship laws that were in effect in the interwar period until Czechoslovakia's loss of independence in late 1938 and the country's demise the following year. People who are registered on my database are those who were born on the territory of pre-war independent Czechoslovakia and in Czech and Slovak towns prior to the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Amongst those who arrived in Australia were Jewish refugees who escaped from persecution in Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere and who found refuge in Czechoslovakia. These refugees arrived in Australia with travel documents, not passports, issued by the Czechoslovak or Czecho-Slovak governments. The problem of determining whether a refugee was or was not a Czechoslovak citizen is thus compounded by the fact that on arrival in Australia they all declared that they were of Czechoslovak nationality, irrespective of the fact that they had no such claim.

Who then was a Czechoslovak refugee? According to Czechoslovak citizenship laws, a person who lived in the country without interruption from 1 January 1910 until 16 July 1920 and had the right of domicile in the territory, which became the Czechoslovak Republic, was entitled to Czechoslovak citizenship. The right of domicile in the country applied to people who were born on the territory of the new state, who were legitimate children of a father who was a Czechoslovak citizen, and to women who married someone with domicile rights. After Hitler's rise to power, those who sought refuge in Czechoslovakia were keen to apply for Czechoslovak citizenship. The condition for qualifying for citizenship was dependent on the applicant being able to prove that their grandfather's right of domicile had been officially recognized.[42]

On arrival in Australia some refugees declared that they were Czechoslovak citizens because they were not prepared to admit that they were stateless when living in Czechoslovakia. During the crisis in 1938 and 1939, both the Czechoslovak and Czecho-Slovak governments were anxious to see foreigners, who were subject to attacks from the press, leave the country as soon as possible.[43] The likelihood that they would either be forcefully returned to the countries they had fled from after the dissolution of Czecho-Slovakia, was a matter of concern for these people.[44] They were in effect stateless people and yet in order to apply for immigration visas to any country, they had to produce a travel document. Therefore, any travel document they were provided with by the former Czechoslovak or by Czecho-Slovak authorities was of immense value.[45]

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[42] My gratitude goes to Alena Sklípalová of the National Archives of the Czech Republic for clarifying this issue.

Thus, the refugees who arrived in Australia were in possession either of Czechoslovak, Czecho-Slovak or Protectorate passports or, alternatively, Czechoslovak or Czecho-Slovak travel documents. With the word Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia written on their travel documents, all of the refugees declared on arrival in Australia that they were Czechoslovak nationals and were registered as such by Australian officials at the point of arrival. Adding to the problem of identification of genuine Czechoslovak Jewish refugees, as opposed to those who were not entitled to Czechoslovak citizenship, was the reality that almost 100 per cent of all arrivals had German surnames.

To the Australian official behind the desk who was registering them as they disembarked from the ship, the migrant's declaration of Czechoslovak nationality, on the basis of documents supplied to them in Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia, was not a contestable issue. However, this makes the quest for determining the correct number of genuine Czechoslovak Jewish refugees even more complicated, more so because the religion of the arrivals was also not recorded on their registration papers upon their arrival in Australia. However, I was eventually able to determine whether they were Jewish or Gentile by comparing the names of refugees on Australian registration papers, housed in the National Archives of Australia, with names of refugees registered by the Czech Consul-General in Sydney. Solanský recorded the religion of each Czechoslovak refugee, which in most cases was listed as Jewish/Mosaic.[46] Whilst the category used was religious, given the fact the both Solanský himself, and the Czechoslovak government in exile were antisemitic, it could be presumed that racial factors also influenced Solanský's categorization of these refugees as Jewish/Mosaic.

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[43] Michal Frankl, 'Druhá republika a židovští uprchlíci' (The Second Republic and Jewish refugees), in Pojar, Soukupová and Zahradníková, eds, *Židovská menšina za druhé republiky* (Prague: Jewish Museum, 2007), 51.

[44] Ibid. 45–46.

[45] John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 138.

It must also be understood that German and Austrian immigrants were aware of the fact that there was resentment towards people who came from countries that were at war with Australia during the First World War.[47] Moreover, the refugees feared that they would be classified as enemy aliens and interned in Australian detention camps once war broke out. For that reason they were anxious to conceal their origins. Some people declared that they were Czech citizens by spelling their names in Czech although more often than not these names were then misspelt. Such was the case of Brochová, who arrived in Australia with her husband Nathan in September 1941, two years after the war had begun.[48] Broch declared that they were German Jews, but Broch, who added the suffix –ová to her surname (ová indicating a female) also wrote her first name as Rugena (a French transcription of her name) instead of Růžena, the correct spelling of her name in Czech. Although they declared that they were Germans, their Czechoslovak passports were issued by the Czech Consul in Cologne in 1935, in recognition of the fact that Brochová was able to prove that her domicile was the Moravian town of Boskovice.

Another interesting case is that of the world famous Hungarian Jewish conductor Georg Szell, born in Budapest in 1897. Szell, who lived in Vienna for many years, declared that he had both German and Austrian citizenship, yet applied for Czechoslovak citizenship, which he obtained in 1936, as well as a Czechoslovak passport issued in October 1937.[49] Szell arrived in Australia for the first time on 19 April 1938 and for the second time on 23 April 1939 as guest conductor on the invitation of Charles J. Moses, the chair of the ABC. He and his second wife Helene were both registered as Czechoslovak citizens. His Australian landing permit was stamped in his passport in The Hague on 25 March 1939. Szell, who indicated that his permanent residence was the luxurious hotel *Alcron* in the centre of Prague, did not intend to settle in Australia but immigrated to the United States to take up a conducting position with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra.

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[46] Passports and statements, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 405, 'Pasy a výkazy'.

[47] Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 189.

[48] The registration document at the NAA does not indicate where Broch came from or how they succeeded in reaching Australia.

Dr Isidor Huppert, born in Auschwitz, was able, together with his Polish wife and two daughters, to obtain Czechoslovak travel documents in the Moravian town of Prostějov and Australian landing permits in Prague. Dr Huppert likewise declared that he and the members of his family were Czechoslovak nationals when they arrived in Sydney in 1940, sponsored by the CRTF.

Another interesting case is that of the Russian born Vassiliy Semikolenov, who was issued a Czech passport and an Australian landing permit in Venezuela in 1937. He arrived in Australia in 1939. There is thus no shortage of immigrants whose claim to Czechoslovak citizenship was either unsubstantiated or who were simply beneficiaries of Czechoslovakia's willingness to supply them with travel documents, which enabled them to be admitted to Australia.

Some refugees were also eager to prove that they were not Jewish, even though it was known that they were. Whether they were baptized or not, it was important to them not to reveal their Jewish origins for fear that they would become once again victims of antisemitism in their new country. Some refugees went even as far as stating that they were of Aryan, German or Slovak race. What mattered to them most was to make sure that they would not be mistaken for being Jewish.

In the course of reviewing and establishing the origins of refugees, when their claim to Czechoslovak citizenship was in doubt, it was eventually possible to distinguish whether the refugees were of Czech or Slovak nationality and whether their declaration that they were Czechoslovak citizens was genuine or not. This was dependent on the document on which they travelled to Australia. Travel documents in possession of German and Austrian asylum seekers in Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia were marked differently to holders of Czechoslovak passports. During the war, the Czechoslovak government in exile tried to deal with the question of verifying the nationality of refugees who claimed Czechoslovak citizenship. As had been the case before the war, the Roman numeral 'I' or the letter 'a' was to be added to the number on their travel documents. In addition, the Chancellery of the President of the Republic (in exile), together with the Czechoslovak Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior in London issued a statement on 12 June 1941 to their diplomatic representatives worldwide, which stipulated that not every person who claimed Czechoslovak citizenship was entitled to it. Special attention was drawn to the fact that persons who were issued with Czechoslovak passports/travel documents before the war and were at the time citizens of an enemy state, were not to be re-issued with new Czechoslovak passports. Although the holders of these documents could claim the protection of Czechoslovak authorities, they were not to be considered Czechoslovak citizens. Should they attempt to do so, for example, by declaring that they had lost the documents on the basis of which their Czechoslovak citizenship was authorized, their declarations were to be verified. This statement was signed by Jan Masaryk, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in exile.[50]

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[49] NA, P, Ministerstvo Vnitra, Stará Registratura, 1936–1940, Sign. 11/281/7 Karton 5860 and the NA, P, Czechoslovak passport issued 11.10.1937. PR 1941–1950 sign. S1120/26, Karton 9975.

The Czech Consul-General in Sydney dealt with doubtful citizenship claims in accordance with directives issued by his superiors in the Czechoslovak government in exile in London. During the war, the Consul registered those who were genuine Czechoslovak refugees and until the end of the war registration lists were forwarded on a regular basis to London where they were processed and placed on record by administration officials of the Czechoslovak government in exile. In July 1941 the number of refugees appearing on the list forwarded by Solanský to the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London indicated that there were altogether 572 Czechoslovak immigrants, both Jewish and non-Jewish in Australia. Solanský's figures on the number of immigrants from Czechoslovakia were summarized as follows:

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[50] AŮTGM, EBII/EBL 94, Karton 332, 'Propůjčování čs. občanství'.

New South Wales	364
Victoria	170
South Australia	33
Northern Territory	2
Queensland	13
New Guinea	1

Solanský did not record any Czechoslovak migrants living in Western Australia at this point in time[51] although we now know that during the war five refugees from Czechoslovakia who settled in Western Australia joined the Australian armed forces. Refugees registered by Solanský in 1941 were fewer in numbers than those that appear on my database because I also included refugees who arrived in 1942, 1943 and 1944, plus the lists that Solanský compiled incorporated only refugees who were genuine Czechoslovak citizens. Solanský was very particular in checking each refugee's claim to Czechoslovak citizenship while the refugees registered on my database include those whose Czechoslovak citizenship was in doubt.

It is remarkable that in comparison to the number of Jewish refugees from Bohemia and Moravia, fewer Jews from Slovakia arrived in Australia. Representatives of the Jewish community in Slovakia had demanded an equal allocation of British funds for the emigration of Slovak Jews. However, given that Slovakia had established itself as an independent state and aligned itself officially with Germany, the Protectorate government and banking authorities in Prague and Britain were unwilling to release funds for the benefit of Slovak Jewish emigration. The justification was that the British grant had been provided at a time when Czechs and Slovaks were citizens of the same state. Following the dissolution of the country in

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[51] Letter from Solanský to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, 23 July 1941, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

March 1939, British authorities were reluctant to provide funds to the government of 'independent' Slovakia, which would have included grants for Slovak Jewish emigration.[52] However, according to my database, a number of Slovak Jewish refugees were issued Australian landing permits by the British Passport Control Officer in Bratislava, despite the fact that they were considered unsuitable for immigration to Australia.[53] Interestingly, most Slovak emigrants, who arrived in this country, then continued to New Zealand, while the Czech Jews settled in Australia.[54]

Passports, Travel Documents and Landing Permits

Registration documents available at the National Archives of Australia also provide important information on the place of issue of the refugees' passports, their travelling papers, as well as their landing permits. For example, passports issued in the years preceding 1938 were issued in Czechoslovakia or abroad to any Czechoslovak citizen, including those residing in the Sudetenland. At that point in time Czechoslovak consular officials were still able to issue passports to their citizens in Germany and Austria. Following Czechoslovakia's losses at Munich in 1938, Czecho-Slovak passports, as well as travel documents for those who had found asylum in Czechoslovakia were issued to applicants for emigration. However, even after Czechoslovakia lost its independence, Czechoslovak diplomatic representatives abroad were still carrying out their functions in several countries.

According to my database, Czechoslovak consular officials also issued passports to their citizens in Poland, Yugoslavia, Latvia, The Netherlands and France before these countries were overrun by the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, Czechoslovak passports were issued in the South African Union, India, Palestine, Singapore, Venezuela, Japan, Sweden, Spain and

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[52] Kuklík, *Do poslední pence*, 67, 73 and 75.

[53] See T. H. Garrett's Fact-Finding Mission to Europe.

[54] Heumos indicates that fifty-five Slovak Jews arrived in Australia and New Zealand. *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 106.

Australia during the course of the Second World War. Likewise, exiles who sought asylum in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s and were not entitled to apply for Czechoslovak passports, were issued with travel documents in Prague, Bratislava, Karlovy Vary, Vienna, Budapest, Zagreb, Milan, Trieste and Jerusalem. Landing permits, approved by the Australian High Commission in London, were then stamped into passports in Prague, Budapest, London, Milan, Paris, Basel, Zurich, Singapore (1942), Brussels, Antwerp, The Hague, Sofia, Papeete (Tahiti), Washington, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Batavia, Noumea, and San Francisco. Some refugees sent their application forms directly to Canberra, where they also received their landing permits. However, that was before the Department of the Interior decided that these could only be approved and processed by the Australian High Commission in London. Thus we can see that the year in which the passports or travel documents were issued, as well as the place of issue, provides a great deal of information on the movements of refugees and their dispersal worldwide, as well as their escape routes.

Professional Qualifications

Developing my database also enabled me to document the migrants' professions and trade qualifications, as well as the obstacles and difficulties encountered in their search of employment or attempts to establish their own businesses in Australia. A review of the professional qualifications of the refugees leaves no doubt that Czechoslovak emigrés had much to offer Australia. Most prominent amongst them were engineers, businesspeople, academics, textiles industry specialists, architects, chemists, banking and accounting experts, metallurgists, teachers and farmers. Tradespeople were also well represented – tanners, electricians, tailors, dressmakers, milliners, furriers, clothing and shoe industry workers and hairdressers. There were also artists amongst the refugees – a sculptor, a dancer, an actress and a circus acrobat.[55] In addition there were also many students who quickly adjusted to the Australian educational system. With the passage of time, most of the Czechoslovak refugees I interviewed, who arrived in Australia during that period, were able to apply their skills, develop their own businesses, engage in new industries and live comfortable lives.[56]

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[55] Ibid.

Refugees with medical and dental qualifications were the ones who encountered the most serious difficulties in seeking employment due to the fact that their degrees were not recognized by medical boards in Australia.[57] Unless they were prepared to retrain at Australian universities and re-qualify they were forced to take menial jobs to earn a livelihood. Restrictions on medical practitioners, imposed on them by medical boards, was not only a sign of no confidence in their professional capacities but also a general expression of negative sentiment towards Jewish doctors. The arrival of highly qualified medical practitioners, who would compete with Australian doctors, was of concern to the Australian medical authorities.[58] Legal professionals were likewise affected because Australian jurisprudence differed to that which foreign lawyers were trained to practice and implement and so they had to retrain in Australia if they desired to practice law.[59]

Sponsorship

New immigrants were in need of assistance in order to acquaint themselves with living conditions in Australia, to adjust their skills to new circumstances and to conform to unfamiliar social norms. The AJWS was established to extend a helping hand to those who were in search of accommodation, work and education for their children.[60] One of the former refugees whom I interviewed was critical of the AJWS because, according to him, the circumstances of those who arrived from Czechoslovakia were ignored, while the attention of the Society was focused solely on German, Austrian and Polish refugees.[61] However, my database does indicate that the AJWS and Sir Samuel Cohen personally sponsored some refugees, although there were not many and details on the actual assistance extended to them is unavailable.

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[56] Rutland, *The Edge of the Diasp*ora, 257–294.

[57] NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068. Letter to K. G. Wybrow.

[58] Suzanne D. Rutland, *Take Heart Again*, *The Story of a Fellowship of Jewish Doctors*, A Special Project (Sydney, 1983), 8–21. See also NAA A433, 1943/2/46, 'Refugees (Jewish and Others) – General Policy File 1938–1939', Item 74068. Letter from A. R. Peters to K. G. Wybrow, secretary, Advisory Committee, undated.

[59] The story of Karl Josef Koenig is included in Chapter 10.

Some refugees indicated on their registration forms that relatives and friends who were resident in Australia sponsored them. Of interest is the case of Gertrude Willner, a Jewish solicitor from Czechoslovakia who arrived in Australia on 7 November 1939, sponsored by Jessie Street, a university-educated feminist and Secretary of the National Council of Women.[62] Nothing else is known about Gertrude Willner.

Evacuees from South East Asia

Some Czechoslovak refugees succeeded in reaching Australia during the Japanese invasion of South East Asia. Most of them arrived via Batavia, as Jakarta was then known. The majority were Jewish. Paul Berg obtained his landing permit in Brno. He lived in Singapore and arrived on the *Gorgon* in Fremantle on 2 February 1942. Emil Marischler, an officer in the Czech army, was a hotel manager in Singapore. He obtained his landing permit in Batavia on 17 February 1942 and arrived in Fremantle on the *Whang Pu* on 1 March 1942. His wife Ludmila and seven-year-old daughter Marcella, who received their landing permits in Calcutta, were evacuated from Singapore to Bombay and from there transported on the *Dominion Monarch* to Fremantle, where they arrived on 11 March 1942. The Marischlers declared that they were Catholics.[63] Oswald Mense worked in Singapore as a mechanical engineer, representing the Czechoslovak military industry. He and his wife Else received their landing permits in Bombay on 12 November 1940, although they arrived from Singapore on the *Tanda* on 30 March 1942, six weeks after Singapore fell to the Japanese. Paul Robitschek was a representative of the world famous Baťa footwear industries, working in Singapore where he lived with his wife Alice. The couple obtained their landing permits in Singapore. Alice arrived in Australia by air on 7 June 1941 and Paul arrived in Melbourne on the *Boissevain* on 23 February 1942. Ilsa Schmidlová was evacuated from Singapore and arrived on the *Whang Pu* on 1 March 1942. Bedřich Vodák worked as an electrical engineer in Singapore. He likewise arrived in Fremantle on the *Whang Pu* on 1 March 1942. Jaroslav Zapalač was a merchant in Singapore. He obtained his Australian landing permit in Batavia on 18 February 1942 and arrived in Fremantle on 27 February 1942. However, he left Australia again, only to return in 1950 and before departing the Commonwealth in 1951. Ladislav Kvapil was a teacher in Singapore. He obtained his landing permit in Batavia in 1942 and arrived in Fremantle on the *Deucalion* on 3 February 1942. He also trained in the army in Malaya and was sponsored by the Czech Consul-General in Sydney.

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[60] Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 177–178.

[61] This experience was related to me by Francis Lord, whose story will appear in the final chapter.

[62] 'Jessie Street (1889–1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 16 (Canberra: Australian National University, 2002), 328–331.

Two evacuees have particularly interesting stories. Petr Kutiš received his landing permit in Colombo, Ceylon.[64] He arrived in Townsville on 15 March 1943 on the *Duntroon*.[65] Kutiš later joined the Royal Australian Navy and was on active service on *HMAS Magnetic* during the war in New Guinea.[66] Kutiš was a Roman Catholic and later served as a missionary.

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[63] Register of Consul-General Solanský, AMZV. On Evacuees from Singapore see also AŮTGM, EB II/1 Sign. EBL 76, Karton 314, 'Sociální Evakuace'.

[64] Now Sri Lanka.

[65] NAA SP 11/2, 'Peter Kutis' (Box 50), Sydney, Item 4322789.

[66] NAA A6770, 'Peter Kutis', Item 5249647.

The story of Anton Ringel, the second evacuee from New Guinea is extraordinary. When Solanský compiled his statistics for July 1941, he indicated that there was one Czechoslovak citizen living in New Guinea, whom he did not name. Nevertheless, this person, Anton Ringel, was included in my database with a note that he was evacuated from Papua. Born in Petřikovice in 1863, he arrived in New Guinea in 1897, twenty-one years before Czechoslovakia became an independent state. Ringel's story was published in 1942 in *The Argus*, fifteen months after Solanský included him in his records, most likely due to the fact that Ringel was issued with a landing permit in 1941. He was a gold miner who lived in isolation on top of Mount Albert Edward in the Central region of New Guinea, 140 km from Port Moresby. His only contacts were Papuan natives. He returned to Europe prior to the outbreak of the First World War and married an Austrian woman with whom he had children. Unable to resist his longing for New Guinea, he returned in 1928,[67] this time with his fourteen-year-old son, whose name we don't know. However, the boy was unable to adjust. He became ill and was transferred to a mental institution in Queensland where he died six years later. When the Japanese invaded New Guinea, Ringel was cut off from the Kokoda trail. Having initially refused to leave his hideout, he later changed his mind and walked barefoot through the jungle, avoiding Japanese troops. He arrived at Port Moresby bedraggled and suffering from malnutrition. From there he was evacuated on the *Taroona* by the Australian Navy, reaching Townsville on 24 September 1942.[68] Ringel remained in Australia until his death in 1951.

In contrast to Czechoslovak citizens who were unable to secure landing permits and those who were admitted to Australia following the Japanese invasion of their country of refuge, there were some Czechoslovak citizens who came to Australia against their will. As previously indicated, the Australian government was primarily interested in accepting non-Jewish Sudeten Germans whom they considered to be the 'good type of refugee'.

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[67] NAA BP/9/3, 'Anton Ringel', Item 3427902.

[68] 'Anton Ringel leaves his Eyrie', *The Argus* (16 October 1942). NAA BP/9/3, 'Anton Ringel', Item 3427902; NAA SP423/5, 'Anton Ringel (Box 29)', Item 352803; and NAA A12508, 'Ringel Anton', Item 72266065.

As a result of the Munich Agreement, Sudeten German social democrats languished in refugee camps in Czecho-Slovakia. Stripped of their Czecho-Slovak citizenship and unable to return to their homes for fear of imprisonment, torture and death, they were anxious to find asylum anywhere in the world. Britain, to which most refugees were seeking admission, was considered by many to be a transit country, because the governments of Canada and Australia had expressed interest in their admission, although it was in Britain where the immigration process, leading to their resettlement in the Dominions, was to be finalized. Assisted by the BCRC, it is estimated that 1,620 Sudeten Germans initially found asylum in the UK.[69] However, their hopes for freedom in Britain or for finding new homes in the Dominions were dashed when the Second World War began. Their story will form part of the following chapter, which focuses on the experiences of the Czechoslovak refugees during the war years.

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[69] Apart from being admitted to Britain, 232 Sudeten German refugees were admitted to Sweden, 227 to Belgium, 140 to Denmark and Norway (original source does not provide numbers for each country), fifty-four to Finland and forty-six to France. However, Heumos maintains that it is not possible to determine the exact number of refugees from Czechoslovakia who succeeded in leaving Poland before that country was invaded by Germany on 1 September 1939. See Heumos, *Die Emigration aus der Tschechoslowakei*, 53 and 86.

CHAPTER 9

Australia and the Czechoslovak Government in Exile

> It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.
> — ROBERT G. MENZIES (1939)[1]

Developments during the Second World War

These were the words of Australia's prime minister, Robert G. Menzies, to his fellow citizens on 3 September 1939. Following the outbreak of the Second World War Australia found itself in a precarious position. As a Dominion Member of the British Commonwealth, Australia felt obliged to make her military forces available to the Motherland's defence. Thus, Australian troops were engaged in battles in Italy, Greece, North Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia and the Pacific. In addition, Australia continued to follow the lead of Britain in its attitudes towards Czechoslovakia and her emerging government in exile.

The first issue concerned the recognition of the National Committee of the Czechoslovak Republic by the Australian government on 17 May 1940. The National Committee preceded the establishment of the Provisional Czechoslovak government in London which the British government recognized on 21 July 1940. Australia's recognition followed on 22 November 1940.

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[1] Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies, wartime broadcast, Australian War Memorial, 3 September 1939.

Following the resignation of Chamberlain in May 1940 and the resignation of Lord Halifax in December 1940, Winston Churchill, the new prime minister and Anthony Eden, the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, were hesitant to give Beneš and his government full recognition. In contrast to the French, Norwegian, Polish, Belgian and Dutch governments in exile, who were accorded full recognition by Britain, Beneš and members of his Cabinet were sidelined. The British were of the opinion that the government of Emil Hácha, regardless of its subservience to the Nazi regime, was the rightful successor to Beneš, following the latter's abdication and departure from Czecho-Slovakia in October 1938. Moreover, the British government was reluctant to commit itself to the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic to its borders as they stood prior to 29 September 1938.[2]

Although Beneš, together with Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, were determined to gain full recognition the antagonism of the British towards Beneš was at the root of their treatment of him, which had in part been generated by the attitude of Britain's emissaries towards everything that Czechoslovakia stood for. Moreover, the protracted campaign against the pre-war Czechoslovak government emanating from some quarters of the British press in the 1930s endured with regard to Czechoslovakia's representatives in wartime exile. However, some of the antagonism also stemmed from the fact that Beneš spared no effort in reminding the British that the Second World War was the result of the policy of appeasement, that he had been barred from attending the Munich conference, that France had reneged on its agreement to come to Czechoslovakia's aid, that Britain and France had not, as promised, implemented their guarantees to safeguard the new borders and that the Czechoslovak army was even now contributing to the Allied armies in their struggle against Germany.[3] Given Churchill's condemnation of Britain's sell out of Czechoslovakia to Hitler, it was also difficult for Czech politicians in exile to come to terms with the fact that the new British prime minister was reluctant to concede that the Munich

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[2] Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich*, 200–240.

[3] Detlef Brandes, *Exil v Londýně 1939–1943* (*Exile in London 1939–1943*) (Prague: Karolinum, 2003), 69.

Agreement was invalid.[4] Smetana correctly summed up the situation at the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Munich Agreement in September 2013, stating that as prime minister, Churchill found it too humiliating to admit that Britain was capable of signing an agreement with Hitler that brought about the destruction of Czechoslovakia.[5]

Importantly for Australia, the Foreign Office insisted that the Dominions had to be consulted on granting full recognition of the Czechoslovak government in exile. Menzies expressed his opinion on this issue in a message addressed to Lord Cranborne, the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, on 30 March 1941:

> In spite of personal assurances which Dr Benes might give, it seems not unlikely that the accordance of full recognition as requested by governments of the British Commonwealth would, in fact be construed in other countries as committing us to restoration of Czechoslovakia in original form. [...] We believe we should not undertake at the present stage anything that can be regarded as a commitment. In general, we do not believe that there is justification for altering the existing status of Czechoslovakian Provisional Government.[6]

Menzies reiterated this statement in response to Lord Cranborne's cable on 30 May 1941.[7] His negative sentiments towards Czechoslovakia and its leaders, which he had formed during the Czechoslovak crisis in 1938 and 1939, persisted.[8] However, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22

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[4] Jan Němeček, Ivan Šťovíček, Helena Nováčková and Jan Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně (1942)* (*Minutes of the Meetings of the Czechoslovak Government in London in 1942*) (Prague: Institute of History, 2008), 103, 104, 125, 130, 131, 335, 336, 342, 344.

[5] '*Zvon zrady*'. *Jaký je pohled historiků na mnichovkskou dohodu 75 let od jejího podepsání?* (*The Bell of Treason*, *What is the view of Czech historians on the Munich Agreement*, *75 years after its signing?*) Czech television *Historie.cs*, 28 September 2013.

[6] NAA A1608, B41/1/3, 'Czechoslovakia Part 3', Item 206159. Cablegram to Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs 30.3.1941.

[7] NAA A6006, 1940/A20//1/3, 'Recognition of Czechoslovak National Committee and Provisional Government', Item 477267.

[8] See 'Australian Responses to the Munich Agreement'.

June 1941, the situation changed. Josef Stalin had not been implicated in the Munich crisis and his government declared that the USSR was prepared to give the Czechoslovak authorities in London full recognition. Britain could, therefore, no longer delay according the same status to the Czechoslovaks as it did to other governments in exile operating on British soil. Thus, both Britain and the Soviet Union did so on 18 July 1941.[9] Australia's cautious recognition of the Czechoslovak government in exile followed within seventeen hours.[10]

Nevertheless, the recognition of Czechoslovakia's government in exile by the UK in 1941 was only partial because of Churchill's concerns about the wisdom of restoring Czechoslovakia to its original form, prior to September 1938. That would have meant revising the definition of the implications of the Munich Agreement: that the Agreement was in fact not destroyed by Germany's act of aggression in March 1939, as the British alleged, but because the concept of the Munich Agreement was from the beginning ill-founded and baseless. It was only after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in June 1942 by British trained Czechoslovak parachutists, followed by the murderous revenge inflicted upon the Czech nation by Hitler and Czechoslovakia's participation in the armed struggle against Germany that on 5 August 1942 the British government declared the Munich Agreement invalid.[11]

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[9] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně (1942)* (Thirtieth meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 25 July 1941), 550, 559.

[10] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Cablegram from the Prime Minister's Department to the Secretary of State for Dominions Affairs, London, 18 July 1941 and attached telephoned message to Sir Frederick Stewart from the secretary, Department of External Affairs, sent 12.30 pm 18 July 1941. See also Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich*, 234.

[11] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Exchange of notes between His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom and the government of the Czechoslovak Republic, Anthony Eden to M. Masaryk, London, 5 August 1942. See also Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková

Case Study: Adolf Solanský

When examining the policies of the Czechoslovak government in exile towards Australia during the Second World War, as well as the situation of Czechoslovak Jewish refugees and internees in Australia, it is important consider the role played by the Czechoslovak Consul-General Dr Adolf Solanský. Not much is known about Solanský's personal life. He was awarded his doctorate in Public Law at Columbia University in New York in 1921.[12] It is not known when he joined Czechoslovakia's foreign service although we do know that in 1933 Solanský and his wife Eugenie arrived in Sydney to take up his position as attaché to the Czechoslovak Consulate. In 1934 he was promoted to the rank of Vice-Consul.[13] Solanský's task was to represent Czechoslovakia and to deal with the concerns of his people. He was also required to act as mediator between his government and the Commonwealth on issues of mutual interest.

After the Nazi takeover in March 1939, Solanský demonstrated great courage in resisting demands to surrender his Consulate to the German Consul-General in Sydney.[14] Left without premises and means for securing his livelihood, Solanský was compelled to move to a more modest home in suburban Sydney, from where he continued to carry out his duties.[15] He used his personal savings to provide consular services and to secure

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and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně (1942)* (Sixty-fourth meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 25 August 1942), 528.

[12] Columbia University Catalogue, vol. 1929/1930.

[13] NAA, C123, 9697, 'Solansky, Adolf (Czechoslovakian)', (Box 294), Item 729799.

[14] 'Consulates still exist', *The Mail*, Adelaide (16 September 1939). German policy was subsequently commented on in a confidential letter from the Investigation Branch of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Staff Officer I. S. G. S., Sydney, 18 September 1940. See also NAA, C123, 9697, 'Solansky, Adolf (Czechoslovakian)', (Box 294), Item 729799. The investigation branch followed his activities. There was another report from Police Headquarters in Sydney to Inspector 2nd Class Wilson M. P. I. Section, 7 November 1941.

[15] Letter from Solanský to Jan Masaryk, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

his own living costs. The Czech community also rallied to raise funds to enable him to work and to support himself and his wife.[16] However, it was not only the Czech community that supported Solanský and the Czechoslovak cause. A committee was formed in Sydney in support of the Czechoslovak National Committee under the auspices of Sir Alfred Davidson, a high ranking official in Australia's business and banking sector, which aimed to provide Czechoslovak soldiers with comforts, for which a cultural evening was organized in Solanský's presence.[17] In spite of the unfavourable circumstances, Solanský was determined to fulfil his commitments as the sole representative of free Czechoslovakia in Australia. His situation improved following the establishment of the Provisional Czechoslovak government in exile, which was then able to provide financial support to its diplomatic missions worldwide. As a result, Solanský was then allotted a monthly payment of £100.[18]

On 25 November 1940, Solanský was informed that 'the government of the Czechoslovak Republic had conferred upon him the title of Consul-General'.[19] Solanský then informed the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London that the Governor-General had confirmed his new status as well.[20] Acknowledgement by the Australian government that the Munich Agreement was invalid was communicated to Solanský on 15 September 1942 by W. R. Hodgson, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

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[16] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně 1942* (Fifth meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 30 August 1940), 140.

[17] Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London to Dr Solanský, 10 October 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[18] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně 1942* (fifth meeting, 30 August 1940), 140. Jan Kuklík, the Czech historian and professor of law at Charles University in Prague, referred to the Sydney diplomat in conjunction with the release of additional funds to the Czechoslovak government during the war. According to Kuklík, Solanský was able to receive the sum of £1,170 from an account, held by Barclays Bank, which until then was blocked by the British government, following Czecho-Slovakia's demise in March 1939. See Kuklík, *Do poslední pence*, 101.

[19] Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London, 25 November 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[20] Government of Australia *Gazette No. 36*, 27 February 1941.

Solanský confirmed receipt of the communication 'regarding the juridical, political, diplomatic and territorial consequences of the Four Power Agreement' on 17 September 1942.[21] A cable was then sent to President Beneš.

Apart from organizing the Czechoslovak community's participation in Australia's war effort[22] Solanský was also charged with registering Czechoslovak citizens resident in the Commonwealth. Their names, addresses and other particulars were then forwarded to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London for the duration of the war.[23] In addition, Solanský supported the establishment of Czechoslovak clubs in Sydney and Melbourne.[24]

Whilst Solanský was prepared to go beyond the cause of duty for his non-Jewish fellow Czechs, antisemitic prejudice did influence his attitudes towards Jewish refugees. For example, he insisted that all Czechoslovak subjects provide, amongst other personal data, information on their religious affiliation when completing registration forms. Richard Hirsch and Jan Vohryzek objected to this requirement. Solicitors in Czechoslovakia – Hirsch in Pilsen and Vohryzek in Prague – they refused to answer the question, insisting that the requirement was unconstitutional. Solanský appears to have complained about this to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London in August 1943 stating:

> This diplomatic mission would like to make you aware of the fact that the question 'religion' on the registration form drew several unfavourable comments. For example Dr Jan Vohryzek insisted that the question was unconstitutional with which

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[21] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Power Agreement signed at Munich on 30 September 1938. See also letter from A. Solanský to the secretary, Department of External Affairs, 17 September 1942. AÚTGM, EB II/2, Sign 40/91/XVIII/, Karton 445, 'Austrálie/4'.

[22] Krajanská Austrálie a vydání čs. konsulátu v Sydney Němcům, Section VI, VII, VIII, 6, 7, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[23] Passports and statements, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 405, 'Pasy a výkazy'.

[24] Letters dated: 10 October 1940, 11 November 1942, 17 November 1942, 8 May 1943, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

> Dr Richard Hirsch concurred. Some chose to ignore the issue, while others gave misleading answers, posing as Roman Catholics, Protestants etc.[25]

In his criticism of Jews, Solanský was especially perturbed by the fact that many continued to speak German, which was despised by the Czechs. For this reason he complained to his superiors in London that 'they were still Germanising', using the derogatory Czech word 'němčení'[26] by which Czechs put Jews to shame for speaking German. It is important to note that the leadership of the Jewish community in Sydney also cautioned new arrivals from Germany and Austria to refrain from speaking German in public, lest they arouse disdain.[27] While it is unlikely the AJWS had Czech Jewish refugees particularly in mind when they issued these instructions Solanský clearly felt that it was unacceptable that German-speaking Jewish immigrants from his country made no effort to identify with the Czechs linguistically, especially as many of them were bilingual. He noted that 'in spite of what was happening to them, they still cannot rid themselves of their habit of clinging to their German origins'.[28]

Solanský was not alone in his criticism of Bohemian Jews who spoke German amongst themselves. As Láníček writes, the situation was the same in Britain where Eduard Táborský, Beneš's personal secretary wrote that 'most Czechoslovak Jewish immigrants in Britain spoke German', prompting Sergěj Ingr, the Czechoslovak Minister of Defence in Beneš's government, to declare that 'it was not in the interest of the army to have a "German-Jewish" character'. Here Ingr was referring to the composition of the Czechoslovak army formed in Britain that fought alongside the Allies against the Germans.[29] It is obvious that the identity problems for Jews from Czechoslovakia that had persisted since the second half of the nineteenth century had not been resolved with the emergence of Nazism. What is surprising is that many German-speaking Jews themselves did not realize how important it was to distance themselves from their German background. Some German-speaking Czechoslovak Jews, however, were aware of the problem, as is evident from their attempts to complete their registration forms in Czech – some made spelling mistakes while others requested fellow Jews, whose native language was Czech, to complete the papers for them.[30]

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[25] Passports and statements, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[26] Letter from Solanský to the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[27] Ibid. See also Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 186.

[28] Letter from Solanský to the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[29] Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938–1948*, 54.

It was not only the issue of use of the German language that drew Solanský's criticism of Czechoslovak Jewish refugees. He also held them in contempt because of their real estate acquisitions and business ventures in Sydney. In his reports to London he emphasized that: 'Jews were always known for their lust to enrich themselves quickly', complaining that 'they buy houses, factories, restaurants and other businesses in Sydney while others cannot afford them'.[31] In his report Solanský also criticized some Jews for keeping to themselves and not associating with the community. He added that they did not want to mix with the Slovaks although this was apparently because the Slovaks were not happy to see them as part of the Czechoslovak community. Solanský also complained that some Jews did not donate to Czechoslovak causes. It was only after the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee, the Consul explained, that these Jews began to contribute 'more and more' money.[32]

On another occasion Solanský expressed his hostility towards the attempts of Czech Jewish physicians to gain recognition of their qualifications by medical boards in Australia. In particular, the efforts of Dr Alois Wachstätter, a dental surgeon who lodged a complaint with the medical board because he was not granted permission to practice dentistry in Australia, were met with derision.[33] In his letter to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington, Solanský depicted Wachstätter as a 'parasite and schemer'[34] who was intent on misleading officials, including Solanský himself, to achieve his goals. The letter was replete with antisemitic slurs, such as: 'Dr W. during his stay in Australia was an example of the sort of people that are here amongst the three hundred of our Jewish refugees'. Eventually, Dr Wachstätter left Australia for the United States on 20 September 1940, retrained at Columbia University in New York and later opened his own dental practice there.[35]

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[30] Passports and statements, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[31] Letter from Solanský to the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'. See also Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 191.

[32] Letter from Solanský to the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

Solanský also denigrated other Jewish professionals from Czechoslovakia. Referring to Dr Jan Vohryzek and Dr Juraj Sperling (a lawyer and a doctor) 'that after they had realized the futility of their shenanigans, they at last got the message that they will not be able to practice here. It is therefore commendable that they resorted to make a living by selling tobacco'. Not satisfied with degrading them, he added: 'They anyway practice their professions illegally here, providing services to their fellow Jews'.[36] Notwithstanding these allegations, both Sperling and Vohryzek joined the Australian Army in 1942. Vohryzek later changed his name to John Vernon.[37]

Solanský was especially critical of German and Austrian Jews who acquired Czech travel documents and declared in Australia that they were Czechoslovak citizens. In his letter, dated 2 September 1940, he wrote: 'The

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[33] 'Czech Dentist Refused Recognition', *The Advertiser* (27 February 1940); 'Czech Dentist Refused Registration, Sydney', *Kalgoorlie Miner* (28 February 1940). Dr Wachstätter wrote a ground-breaking book for dental practitioners, entitled: *Odontoplastic surgery*, *Aseptic Implantation*, *Replantation and Transplantation*, published in 1940 by the Australasian Medical Publishing Company.

[34] Confidential letter from Solanský to the Embassy of the Czechoslovak Republic in Washington, 31 October 1941, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[35] Letter by Stephen E. Novak, Head, Archives & Specials Collections, A. C. Long Health Sciences Library, 15 May 2013.

[36] Letter to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington, 31 October 1941, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[37] See Australian War Memorial, World War Two Nominal Roll.

Jews are giving me trouble here. Not so much our Jews, but German and Austrian Jews who are demanding recognition as Czechoslovak citizens'. According to Solanský they tried 'to lure me into providing them with a certificate of Czechoslovak citizenship under the weirdest possible pretexts'.[38]

These refugees sought to prove their Bohemian roots mainly because they feared internment if they were to be classified as 'enemy aliens'. Josef Weiss is a case in point. He was born in Bratislava in 1872 but had lived in Vienna since 1917. Weiss requested the assistance of Dr Karel Gintz, a prominent Czech Jewish refugee, who wrote to Solanský on 24 August 1940, asking him to view Weiss's case with sympathy.[39] In his report to the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, Solanský made it clear that he refused to compromise.[40] In reply to his letter, the Minister supported Solanský's decision, stating: 'he is not to issue passports or any other documents on the basis of which Australian authorities could gain the impression that these people were Czechoslovak citizens'.[41]

Solanský also alerted local authorities to attempts by former German and Austrian asylum seekers in Czechoslovakia, who arrived on Czecho-Slovak travel documents in Australia, to be recognized as Czechoslovak citizens. He wrote to the New South Wales government, requesting that identity cards should be issued only to 'genuine' Czechoslovak citizens, who could prove that they were of Czechoslovak nationality and not enemy aliens. His request was rejected.[42] On 6 November 1942, in his letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, Solanský reported to his superiors that in April 1942 he had advised the Police Department in

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[38] Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[39] Letter from Dr Karel Gintz to Solanský, 24 August 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[40] Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[41] Reply from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to Solanský, 10 October 1930, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[42] NAA, C123, 9697, 'Solansky, Adolf (Czechoslovakian)', (Box 294), Item 729799. Letter from Frank Strahan, 28 August 1940. See also letters from the Eastern Command Registry (Secret), Melbourne, 23 September 1940 and October 1940.

Sydney on methods 'to cleanse the Czechoslovak colony in Sydney from elements that do not belong to it'. According to Solanský, this was necessary, because in Sydney alone, 400 adults had been able to declare that they were Czechoslovak citizens only because the police failed to check their identities. The fact that these people were Jews was not mentioned.[43] It is interesting to note, however, that the word 'elements' was also used by Hubert Ripka, the Minister of State in Beneš's Cabinet in exile when he declared that Jews and Sudeten Germans (mostly Jewish) were 'unreliable elements'.[44]

However, Jewish refugees who anglicized their German names were also the subject of criticism from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior of the Czechoslovak government in exile. The Czechoslovak authorities believed that the refugees' decision to change their names was unacceptable. This view was expressed in a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior in London, together with an attached list of names of Czechoslovak Jews who had changed their names in Australia.[45]

In 1944 Solanský informed Czechoslovak authorities in London that he had formed a Czechoslovak business association, consisting of experts who emigrated to Australia prior to or after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia including: Dr Albert May, former director of a sugar refinery in Olomouc; Ing Jindřich (Henry) Rubin, former secretary of the Juta company in Turnov; Hermann Wolf, former director of the Meva company in Prague; and Ing Josef Popper, former director of the Křižík electrical company in Prague. Rudolf Bass was made treasurer. The fact that they were all Jews was omitted in his report.[46] Solanský also recommended Rubin for cooperation with the Australian Reconstruction Authorities on the basis of his expertise in the field[47] although in 1940 he wrote disrespectfully that they (the Jews) had taken on 'highly rewarding positions as experts in industries [in Australia] which they are now in the process of developing'.[48] In spite of Solanský's often unfavourable attitude towards Jews, there were two Jewish refugees, Francis Lord and Kurt Gottlieb, with whom he was very friendly. Both worked at the Mount Stromlo Observatory in Canberra and Solanský had a keen interest in astronomy.

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[43] Letter from Solanský to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 January 1943, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[44] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně 1942* (second meeting, 2 August 1940), 99.

[45] Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London to the Ministry of the Interior, 20 September 1944; letter of the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, date illegible; letter to the Consulate-General of Czechoslovakia in Sydney, 28 November 1944, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

Solanský's sentiments towards Jews were very much in line with those of the Czechoslovak leadership in exile, which reversed the more pro-Jewish attitudes of the pre-war Czechoslovak government. As Láníček, in his work on the relationship between exiled politicians and the Jews, points out the tide turned against them during the war in as much that 'the exiles expressed traditional prejudices against the Jews as a whole'. Láníček refers to General Sergěj Ingr's comments on Jews when he overtly condemned them as 'cowards', noting that they had left 'the Protectorate for economic reasons'.[49] Láníček also cites Eduard Táborský who was also in agreement, implying that Jews from Czechoslovakia were not willing to serve in the army,[50] which was clearly a negative and untrue stereotype. Neither the Czechoslovak politicians in London, nor their representative in Sydney, were willing to recognize that the issue of linguistic affiliations of the Jews was insignificant. Instead they found it more prudent to dishonour Jews by emphasizing that they persisted in speaking German, that they were successful in enriching themselves, allegedly on account of others, and that they were dishonest when trying to prove that they were Czechoslovak citizens or when they attempted to gain recognition for their qualifications in Australia. These expressions served to resurrect antisemitic sentiments at the time when Jews had fallen victim to terror throughout occupied Europe.

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[46] AÚTGM, III. 1944, MV, DEP 1/21/TD 'Austrálie' EBII/1. Cable no. 256/Syd.2/44, Sydney, 27 January 1944. See NAA A981, CZE 15, 'Relations with Australia', Item 174714.

[47] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Correspondence re Henry Rubin between Hodgson and Solanský, 8–11 September 1942.

[48] Report of 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'. See also NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703. Correspondence re Henry Rubin between Hodgson and Solanský, 8–11 September 1942.

[49] Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938–1948*, 54.

[50] Ibid.

Internment of Czechoslovak Refugees

Following Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, followed by Denmark, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and Norway in 1940, the British government became concerned that Britain was to be the next target of Hitler's aggression. As a result, the presence of former German, Austrian and Italian citizens in the UK in 1940 was considered by the British authorities to be a security risk. After Churchill became prime minister, he ordered their internment as a precautionary measure. The fact that the refugees were in their majority Jewish victims of Nazi policy was not taken into consideration.[51]

The situation of the Sudeten German refugees, however, remained ambiguous. Less than three weeks after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Australian prime minister's Department received a cable from the office of the High Commissioner in London, informing him of measures taken by the British government with regard to the German and former Austrian nationals residing in Britain. The men were either to be interned as enemy aliens, or not interned but subjected to restrictions applicable to enemy aliens. William Strang, the British Assistant Under-Secretary of

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[51] London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948*, 170–171 and Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), 87.

State for Europe, declared that Czechoslovak subjects, including Sudeten Germans, who had Czechoslovak passports, would not be treated as enemy aliens.[52] However, the declaration was ambiguous because it also stipulated that they could in fact be interned under Defence Regulations 18(b) or treated as friendly aliens.[53]

In response to the cablegram from the High Commission in London, the prime minister's Department in Canberra declared that the Commonwealth agreed that Czechoslovaks were not enemy aliens, with the exception of Sudeten Germans who 'could not claim other than German nationality.'[54] Having declared its position on Czechoslovak and Sudeten German refugees on 25 September 1939 to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Canberra, Sir Geoffrey Whiskard then sent an urgent and secret cable to Menzies on 15 June 1940 in which he inquired as to whether the Australian government would agree to accept German and Italian internees for detention in Australia. In a brief statement issued on the same day, the Cabinet announced its decision to accept them 'in principle'. On 27 June 1940 the Secretary of the High Commission of the UK in Canberra R. R. Sedgewick sent a cable to London, informing the British government that the Commonwealth government had agreed to accept the internees.

On 16 July 1940, five days prior to the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak government in exile by the British government, over 2,000 German, Italian and Austrian internees boarded the *Dunera* to be sent to Australia. Amongst them were fifty-four Czechoslovak nationals, most of them Jews. The Provisional Czechoslovak government in exile were aware that Czechoslovak citizens were detained in the UK although it insisted that none were interned on the initiative of Czechoslovak authorities.

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[52] AÚTGM, EB II. Sign. V 112, Karton 130.

[53] NAA A461, S349/3/5, 'Immigration – Czechoslovakia (Sudeten areas)', Item 95547. Cablegram from the High Commissioner's Office, London, 18 September 1939.

[54] NAA A1608, A20/1/3, Part 1, 'War – 1939 Transfer of Internees to Australia from the UK – Policy', Item 204822. Reply from the Prime Minister's Department, Canberra, 25 September 1939.

However, it did share the concerns of the British government that foreigners on British soil could pose security risks.[55]

Whether President Beneš and members of his Cabinet were aware that Czechoslovak refugees were amongst the deportees at that point in time is not known. Moreover, there was no mention of the internment of Czechoslovak citizens in Australia in official reports of meetings of the Czechoslovak provisional government. The detainees arrived after a harrowing journey in Fremantle on 10 August 1940.[56] Reviewing the unsatisfactory situation in Australian detention camps, Duncan, Official Secretary at the High Commission in London wrote: 'it is reasonable to assume that the great majority of the civilian internees sent to Australia are of Jewish race and might therefore enlist the sympathy of the AJWS with headquarters in Sydney'.[57] Yet, the AJWS showed no interest in the plight of the refugees until a deputation of family members approached the society. Saul Symonds, chair of the executive, Walter Brand, the general secretary, Rabbi Falk and later the Anglican Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher then took up their cause, so that the internees gradually received the backing they sought. It was, however, far from adequate.

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[55] *Zápisy ze schůze československé vlády (1940–1941)*, minutes of the meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 30 August 1940, 133–134.

[56] Benzion Patkin, *The Dunera Internees* (Stanmore: Cassell Australia, 1979); Cyril Pearl, *The Dunera Scandal: Deported by Mistake* (Paddington, New South Wales: P. Pearl, 1983); Klaus Neumann, 'Fifth Columnists? German and Austrian refugees in Australian internment camps', public lecture for the National Archives of Australia, the Goethe Institute (Sydney) and the Centre for European Studies at the University of New South Wales, presented in Sydney by Klaus Neumann, 17 April 2002; Konrad Kwiet, '"Be patient and reasonable!" The internment of German-Jewish refugees in Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 31/1 (1985), 61–77; and Klaus Loewald, 'The Eighth Australian Employment Company', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 31/1 (1985), 78–89. See also Albrecht Dümling, 'Uncovering Traces: German speaking refugee musicians in Australia', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 19/2 (2008), 219–236; Dümling, *The Vanished Musicians*.

[57] NAA A1608, A20/1/3, Part 1, 'War – 1939 Transfer of Internees to Australia from the UK – Policy', Item 204822. Letter from Duncan to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, 20 November 1940.

The names of hundreds of internees appeared on registration lists that were compiled in detention camps. Amongst them were detainees sponsored by the CRTF, who in their majority were born in Bohemia, including the Sudetenland, in Moravia and Slovakia. In addition, there were also those whose place of birth was in Germany and Austria. A number of the German and Austrian detainees also indicated that they lived in Prague (in most cases in 1938 and 1939) making it obvious that they were asylum seekers in Czecho-Slovakia.

The National Archives of Australia has files relating to detainees in Hay, Tatura, Orange and Loveday internment camps, including those from Czechoslovakia. Patkin describes the ethnic composition of the camp at Hay in southern New South Wales, noting that the Catholic priest Father Walter Koenig referred to a High Court official from Czechoslovakia amongst the detainees and a hut full of German-speaking Czechs.[58] However, not all detainees held in Australia were transported on the *Dunera.* Australian authorities likewise interned foreigners because they were considered to be a security risk to the Commonwealth.[59] Amongst them were some refugees from Czechoslovakia who arrived in Australia in possession of landing permits. On the list of internees there were people whose Czechoslovak citizenship was beyond dispute. However, there are also those who arrived in Britain and Australia on Czechoslovak or Czecho-Slovak travel documents. The nationality on the registration cards of these detainees may have been stamped German or Austrian, although the detainees themselves indicated in writing that they had fled Nazi persecution.[60] Regardless of their claimed country of origin, to the British and Australian authorities the presence of such foreigners in their country was considered undesirable. The fact that the captives were mostly Jewish did not seem to warrant further scrutiny.

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[58] The 'High Court Official' was Dr Karl Josef Koenig. Patkin, *The Dunera Internees*, 65–67.

[59] Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, 193–194.

[60] Kwiet, '"Be patient and reasonable!" The internment of German-Jewish refugees in Australia'; Neumann, 'Fifth Columnists? German and Austrian refugees in Australian internment camps'. See also Dümling, 'Uncovering Traces: German speaking musicians in Australia'.

Interestingly, in one of his reports to his supervisors in London, Solanský drew attention to the fact that some Czechoslovak citizens had been released from internment as a result of his intervention with Australian authorities. It would appear from his correspondence that the initiative was his own, although it is not clear how many detainees were released, who they were, whether they were detained in Australia and if not, whether they remained in Australia or emigrated overseas.[61]

The Czech Refugee Trust Fund and the Australian Connection

When the CRTF was established prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the terms of reference stipulated that assistance was to be extended primarily to German refugees from the Sudetenland, German antifascists and Jewish emigrants. Czechs and Slovaks were only to be assisted if they were endangered.[62] The majority of emigrants who arrived in Britain from Czechoslovakia were German or German-Jewish and the financial support from the CRTF was earmarked for their stay in Britain and possibly for their resettlement in the British Dominions.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War it became obvious that Czechoslovak authorities in exile were also in need of financial resources. After the establishment of the Czechoslovak provisional government, Beneš requested in September 1940 that the terms of reference of the CRTF be revised. This was rejected by British authorities who insisted that the legal foundation of the Trust could not to be altered. The CRTF funds were only to be made available to persons whose lives were threatened and who required financial assistance in order to reach safety when escaping from territories occupied by Germany.[63] However, the State Council[64] then became aware that resources of the CRTF were being used to support not only Sudeten Germans, but also German and Austrian refugees in Britain. Not surprisingly, members of the State Council in London were highly critical of this policy.[65]

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[61] Letter from Solanský to the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, 2 September 1940, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[62] Kuklík and Čechurová, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund a československá emigrace Část 1', 109–110.

In particular, the Trust scheme applied to Czechoslovak citizens who had to be evacuated from France, French North Africa, French West Africa, Switzerland, Spain, Tangier, Portugal, Turkey and Sweden. Moreover, the assistance was intended for 'the ultimate purpose of migration'.[66] At that point in time, no one imagined that funds from the CRTF would be made available to benefit 'enemy aliens' transported to Australia on the *Dunera*.

The story of the mistreatment of the detainees by the crew of the *Dunera* is well known. Having had their suitcases with all their possessions confiscated and thrown into the sea, the prisoners arrived in Australia without being able to sustain themselves. Moreover, they lacked means to purchase clothing and footwear. They were cut off from the rest of the world and had no contact with their loved ones who were left behind. They also had no access to information about political and military developments during the war. Upon arrival in Australia the internees had to complete registration cards with their particulars, which included their date and place of birth, their profession, religion, the place of capture, as well as well as names and addresses of their next of kin. Officials updated these cards when they were transferred from one internment camp to another, hospitalized and released from internment. We now know that those who were born in Czechoslovakia were sponsored by the CRTF, as were some of the German and Austrian asylum seekers in pre-war Czechoslovakia,[67] giving credence to Ambassador Friedmann's report to the State Council.[68]

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[63] Kuklík, *Do poslední pence*, 110. See also AŮTGM, File EB/III, sign. V 79/3 'Velká Británie, Dokumenty, Zprávy, 1939–1944'. Letter from Anthony Eden to Jan Masaryk, 15 April 1941.

[64] The State Council was established on 21 July 1940. It was an advisory council to the Czechoslovak government in exile.

[65] AÚTGM, EB II, Sign. 38A 101, Karton 237, 'Report by Czechoslovak Ambassador Dr J. Friedmann to the UK at the IV Plenary meeting of the State Council on 1 May 1941'.

[66] AÚTGM, Edvard Beneš (1939–1945) Oddíl II, Svazek II/2, 'Czech Refugee Trust Fund', Korespondence A. Edena a J. Masaryka, 'Uprchlící a politická emigrace z ČSR', 1996 40/16/IV29/1, 1941, Karton 370.

In 1941, the British government admitted that the internment of victims of Nazi persecution and their transfer to Australia was an error. Upon receiving news about the deplorable state in which the detainees found themselves in Australian internment camps, Major Julian Layton was sent by the British government to Australia to investigate and report on their situation and to organize their return to Britain.[69] Layton was overwhelmed by the outpouring of complaints and the description of hardships that the internees endured and, after his return to Britain, complaints were lodged that he had not paid adequate attention to their situation. This, however, was not the case. Layton was not indifferent to the internees' plights but during his time in Australia he was on a mission to examine a range of different issues and therefore did not have time to focus on the situation of individuals. This is made obvious from a memorandum that the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council (VIREC) sent to the German Emergency Committee and the CRTF in London which stressed that Major Layton's actions established 'beyond doubt his sympathy with refugees-internees, his sincerity and his high sense of vocation in trying to fulfil his mission'.[70]

While in Australia, Layton toured all internment camps and called for substantial improvements to be implemented. As a result of his visit, Ewart Culpin and H. Verschoyle, the leading officials of the CRTF in London, and Constance Duncan of VIREC in Melbourne took on the task of providing assistance to the internees. After Layton highlighted their predicament, a decision was taken to the effect that the CRTF would provide funds for improving the living conditions of internees in Australia. In addition, 'pocket money' was allocated on a regular basis to each of the internees to enable them to purchase basic necessities, although the amounts varied. Assistance was provided from 'The Lord Mayor's Fund' to purchase wireless sets for individual huts, so that internees would be able to listen to news and other programmes, bringing some relief to their mental deprivation.[71] At the time of their release from detention, some of the internees were found to be in need of presentable clothing in order to apply for employment. VIREC paid out the required sums and requested reimbursement from the CRTF.[72] Following the gradual release of internees, which began in 1942, the payments of pocket money and grants gradually ceased.[73]

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[67] NAA A2908, P22, Part 4, 'Internees from UK to Australia (*Dunera*) 1940–1941', Item 216013.

[68] AÚTGM, EB II, Sign. 38A 101, Karton 237, 'Report by Dr J. Friedmann to the UK at the IV Plenary meeting of the State Council on 1 May 1941'.

[69] AIM25 Archives in London and the M25 Area Administrative/Biographical history Julian Layton. See Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*, 194.

[70] NA UK, HO 294/178, Correspondence concerning internees in camps in Australia. Letter from the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council in Melbourne to the German Emergency Committee and Czech Refugee Trust Fund in London, 12 November 1941.

There is no summary available on the total amount of monies paid by the CRTF for the benefit of interned 'enemy aliens' in Australia. Nevertheless, it is of interest that while some of the interned refugees, mostly Jewish, were given asylum in Czechoslovakia, or were Czechoslovak citizens by birth, others were German or Austrian subjects. They too were beneficiaries of the CRTF. Constance Duncan, mentions one of them, Oskar Seltmann, a Roman Catholic from the German city of Mannheim, as being the 'Camp and CRTF leader in 'A' Compound of No. 4 Camp'.[74] It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain whether funds from the British administered CRTF were intended to assist every detainee in Australia or only a select few.

In his letter to Jan Masaryk on the terms of dispersal of monies administered by the CRTF, Anthony Eden stated: 'it is assumed that the Czechoslovak government will not extend assistance under this arrangement to anyone who is not a Czechoslovak'.[75] This statement contradicts the original terms of reference of the CRTF, and was certainly not conformed to in Australia, where non-Czechoslovak internees were also assisted. Having realized that innocent people had been sent to detention in Australia, the British government felt compelled to make amends. In the face of the financial stringency created by the war effort, they authorized the CRTF to provide funds for necessities to those whom they had mistakenly considered to be security risks.

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[71] NA UK, HO 294/178, Correspondence concerning internees in camps in Australia. Letter to Ewart G. Culpin from Ada Constance Duncan, 15 January 1942.

[72] NA UK, HO 294/178, Correspondence concerning internees in camps in Australia. Letter from A. Constance Duncan to Ewart G. Culpin, 16 January 1942.

[73] NA UK, HO 294/178, Correspondence concerning internees in camps in Australia. Letter from VIREC to H. Verschoyle of the CRTF, 10 August 1944.

[74] NA UK, HO 294/178, Correspondence concerning internees in camps in Australia. Letter from VIREC to Ewart H. Culpin, 18 January 1942.

[75] AÚTGM, EB II, Sign. IV/29/1, Karton 370, 'Korespondence s min. Edenem ve věci Refugee Trust Fund', letters dated 24 October 1940, 15 April 1941 and 22 May 1941.

Many of the internees decided to leave Australia after their release. Whilst they were mainly repatriated to Britain, some left for the United States, Canada and South America, once their visa applications had been approved. Moreover, a number of former detainees decided to leave for Palestine.[76] A total of fifty-one Czechoslovak detainees chose to remain in Australia. They contributed to Australia's war efforts and in the years following the end of the war began to re-build their lives in their adopted country.[77]

The Participation of Czechoslovak Volunteers in the Australian Armed Forces

After the outbreak of the war, Solanský took into consideration that Czechoslovak citizens might decide to remain in Australia. Acting on the advice from his Minister of Foreign Affairs in London, Solanský acted as mediator between the two governments and helped to formalize the participation of Czechoslovak citizens in the Australian armed forces. Until December 1941, when Britain declared war on Japan, Australia had been able to rely on Britain for its defence, with a strong military presence in Singapore, considered to be the gateway to Australia. However, when Singapore fell to the Japanese in February 1942, with 30,000 Australian soldiers taken into captivity, the vast, sparsely populated continent became virtually indefensible. The question of Australia's ability to defend itself then came to the forefront and as a consequence, conscription was introduced in Australia in 1942.

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[76] NAA A2908, P22, Part 4, 'Internees from UK to Australia (*Dunera*) 1940–1941', Item 216013. On Canada's willingness to accept ex-*Dunera* internees see NAA A1608, A20/1/3, Part 1, 'War – 1939 Transfer of Internees to Australia from the UK – Policy', Item 204822. Letter from the UK High Commissioner in Canberra Sir Geoffrey Whiskard to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department in Canberra, 20 November 1940.

[77] Ibid. I am indebted to Carolyn Bunyan, Secretary of the *Dunera Boys* Association, who provided me with the names of former Czechoslovak detainees who remained in Australia after the war came to an end.

The Czechoslovak government in exile was keen to engage units of its army in the struggle against Germany alongside British armed forces. These units, which were formed in France, crossed the Channel to Britain after France was defeated in June 1940. However, this decision to commit Czechoslovak units to fight the Germans alongside the British armed forces was not viewed entirely favourably by the British, perhaps because it would have given a boost to Beneš's efforts to gain recognition for his government.[78] Bruce noted in a secret telegram to the prime minister on 29 April 1940: 'I was particularly clear to him [Beneš] that Australian recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee could only be for the purpose of his recruiting effort for Czechoslovak forces'.[79]

During the war, the Czechoslovak army in the UK, of which there were 10,000 soldiers and 800 airmen, suffered losses in France, Belgium and the Middle East.[80] In addition, Czechoslovak soldiers who fled to the Soviet Union fought alongside the Red Army, under the command of General Ludvík Svoboda, in major battles on the Eastern Front.

Nothing has been written so far about the part played by Czechoslovak soldiers who joined the ranks of the Australian armed forces although the question of their inclusion in a foreign army was the subject of correspondence between the Czechoslovak government in exile and its representative in Australia, Solanský. On 16 February 1942 Solanský was informed that the Commonwealth government had called up all allied citizens. Following the announcement, the government of the Czechoslovak Republic issued a request to Solanský to supply the names of all Czechoslovak citizens who were prepared to join the Australian armed forces. In accordance with Czechoslovakia's constitution, the President of the Republic was required to give each individual permission to be drafted into a foreign army. After taking into account the logistic difficulties involved in transferring Czechoslovak soldiers to Britain, the Czechoslovak government in exile suggested that it would welcome the establishment of a separate Czechoslovak military unit within the Australian Army.[81] At the same time, however, the Ministry of Foreign affairs concluded that in view of the situation in the Far East, the Czechoslovak authorities would not be in the position to oppose the Australian government's decision to include Czechoslovak citizens directly in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).[82] Nevertheless, according to information made available by the Czechoslovak authorities, six Czechoslovak citizens did indeed leave Sydney to join the Czechoslovak army in Britain.[83] Solanský informed the Czechoslovak government in exile that the volunteers from Australia were: Václav Čapek, Milan Gasinec, Axel Reiser, Felix Sussland, Leo Klausner and Hermann Wostry.[84]

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[78] Smetana, *In the Shadow of Munich*, 175–176.

[79] NAA A981, CZE 6, 'Czechoslovak Admin. Govt. (The question of German minority). (Includes five files relating to Czechoslovakia – Government in Exile. E/39/215/3 – E/42/215/50)', Item 174703.

[80] 'Czechs aid Britain', *The Argus* (28 October 1940).

Prior to this exchange of communications, the Australian government announced that 'certain friendly civilian internees who some time ago were sent to Australia by the British government', would be released from detention camps. The Australian Minister for the Army Frank Forde added that

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[81] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně (1942)* (Forty-sixth meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 13 February 1942), 128. See also AMZV, LA 1942, Karton 11, no. 341.

[82] Němeček, Šťovíček, Nováčková and Kuklík, eds, *Zápisy ze schůzí československé vlády v Londýně 1942* (Forty-sixth meeting of the Czechoslovak Cabinet, 13 February 1942), 129.

[83] Ibid. 165.

[84] NAA D1976, SB2941/493, 'Czechoslovak Volunteers for Service with the Czechoslovak Brigade', Item 423804. NAA A434, 1946/3/23, 'Czechoslovak Volunteers – Question of Re-admission', Item 74249.

'many of them have undergone bitter experiences in Nazi concentration camps'. As a result, depending on their physical fitness, former detainees of military age, in their majority Jewish, would be drafted into employment units of the Australian military forces on a voluntary basis.[85]

Solanský wrote to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, objecting to this decision. He was critical of the fact that Australian authorities classified pre-war settlers from Czechoslovakia as refugee aliens and in some cases even as non-refugee aliens. He reported to his superiors in London that he had sent letters of protest on 13 and 14 April 1942 to area officers who were in charge of enlistment of recruits.[86] In a reply to Solanský on 25 April 1942, Major J. W. Richards explained that the procedure of identification of recruits was a complex and lengthy one and due to 'the brief period in which all aliens had to be registered and examined, the services of voluntary staff were utilized'. At the same time the Major stressed that it was important for the army to ascertain whether there were Sudeten Germans amongst the volunteers.[87] The issue of determining the ethnic origin of volunteers from Czechoslovakia, who were previously detained in internment camps, was of great importance to Australian authorities while on the other hand, their religious affiliation was not. Nevertheless, 25 to 30 per cent of soldiers who came from Czechoslovakia were Jewish.

The names of 132 soldiers of Czechoslovak origin who served in the AIF are registered in the National Archives of Australia. Amongst them were three women: Corporal Ilsa Schmidlová, Australian Women's Army Service, Private Florence (Květa) Veselá, Australian Army Medical Women's Service and Brisbane-born Gwendolyne Simek who served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Czechoslovak refugees and pre-war settlers were active in all branches of the Australian armed forces, including one in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Those who were released from internment were included in labour companies, providing logistics support to the armed forces. Sixteen Czechs served in the RAAF, either as aircraft maintenance engineers, leading aircraftmen or pilots. As noted above, one Czech volunteer served in the RAN. Josef Francis Kopanica, was reported missing in 1942 before it was established that he was a prisoner of war of the Japanese. He died in Japanese captivity. His family was informed of his death in August 1945 after the liberation of one of the Japanese concentration camps.

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[85] NAA A2908, P22, Part 8, 'Internees ex-*Dunera*', Item 216017. Cable from the Australian government to D. O., 20 January 1942.

[86] AÚTGM, EB/II/2 Inv. Číslo.sign. 40/70XIII/43, 'Mobilizace čs. příslušníků v Austrálii', 1944, Karton 424.

[87] Ibid. Letter from Major Richards to Solanský, 25 April 1942.

The Returned Services League, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Sokol organization in Sydney and the Czechoslovak Club in Canberra were all unable to provide records of oral history of Czechoslovak volunteers in the AIF. However, there is an important file on one of the airmen of Czechoslovak/Jewish origin in the National Archives of Australia. Eric Rosenfeld was born in Pilsen in November 1912. His parents moved to Australia in the 1920s and established a profitable timber business in Queensland. Eric enlisted in the RAAF in 1941 and first saw service in Australia. In 1943 he transferred to the United Kingdom and took part in major battles of the Second World War in Europe. He was a pilot officer, later a flying officer and subsequently a flight lieutenant and navigator. He was decorated with the Star for France and Germany and the Australian Defence War Medal. Upon his return to Australia he was demobilized in 1946 and settled in Sydney.[88]

The Second World War was a defining point in the lives of millions who fought to save the world from descent into an abyss. It was therefore of great importance for Czechoslovak volunteers in Australia to contribute to the war effort, the more so because the war had its origins in the betrayal of their homeland. To them the fight for Australia embodied their fight for freedom, and thus they too had become part of a worldwide liberation movement.

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[88] NAA A9300, 'Rosenfeld Eric', Item 5255608.

CHAPTER 10

Czechoslovak Jews Down Under: Individual Stories

> We lived very happily in Australia, in spite of the difficult beginnings. We had fulfilling lives in this country that became our home.
>
> — VERA BONYHADY, Sydney, September 2011

The Australian story of every refugee from Nazi-dominated Europe began the moment they stepped off the boat and for refugees from Czechoslovakia the situation was no different. In many cases their financial means were insufficient and their knowledge of English was scant or non-existent. Theirs had been a struggle for survival in the country they were forced to leave and was a continuing struggle in the country that was to become their new home. Yet, the vast majority did manage to re-establish themselves in Australia and, as Vera Bonyhady notes, were very grateful to Australia for enabling them to do this.

Most might have read about Australia before they arrived but nothing would have prepared them for life 'down under'. Spring blossomed at a time when at home trees were already bare. The big tall eucalyptus trees shed millions of rusty leaves and sheaves of bark throughout the summer and yet, for some unexplained reason, the silver-green foliage of the trees appeared intact throughout the year. If the refugees arrived at the beginning of November, they would have experienced the incomprehensible excitement surrounding an event called the Melbourne Cup. When in the past they may have spent their holidays skiing in the mountains, they were now searching for shade on Australia's beaches. The spectacle of waves crashing against the rocks or gliding smoothly towards children building castles in the sand must have been pleasing. With the Polar Star no longer visible at night, the Southern Cross shone above their roofs instead. There was peace in this part of the world and those who arrived on its shores were thankful for having found it.

Yet, more often than not, they felt forlorn. Having reached Australia they then had to make important adjustments. They were unfamiliar with local conditions in an environment that bore no resemblance to the one they had left behind. There was apprehension concerning prospects of employment and finding affordable accommodation. In the majority of cases, the newcomers' circumstances called for stringent budget control while the children had to get used to a different education system. It was important to learn English, to establish good relations with neighbours and maintain those friendships that had been formed during the long voyage to Australia. No matter who they were, where they had come from or what effort it had taken to get to Australia, there was amongst them all a determination to succeed.

Reading through the interviews that I recorded with former refugees or their relatives, it becomes more than obvious that they saw their migration to Australia as transformation from a sophisticated European ambiance to the culture of a frontier country. Their stories represent microcosms of the refugee experience. They tell of each person's own experience during the Czechoslovak crisis, the consequences and impact of that crisis and the confrontations they faced. Whether they succeeded in overcoming these hurdles depended on their skills, their willingness to adapt, their courage to take risks, to come to terms with the past and to search for a meaningful future in their new country. In their majority, they succeeded. Their personal stories form the last part of this book.

Life Altering Changes

How then did the Australian milieu impact on the refugees? The situation for Czechoslovak Jewish refugees was similar to that of those who arrived from Germany and Austria, the more so because the Jewish communities of the three countries were linked together in many ways. They shared a common fate imposed by their rulers, that predated the First World War. The challenges posed with regard to acculturation for those who came from Czechoslovakia were almost identical to their neighbours of the past.[1] Yet, the Australian Jewish community paid no attention to Czechoslovak refugees prior to 1939.

While the Czechoslovak refugees did receive some financial support from the British government (discussed above) the German and Austrian refugees did not. As the majority of refugees from Czechoslovakia were of middle class background, their dependence on financial support from refugee organizations was perhaps not so essential. Some of them had been able to transfer a certain amount of their capital and possessions to Australia in time. Yet there were changes and sacrifices that had to be made. Many of the refugees had to come to terms with the reality that they would not be able to employ household help, as had been the case at home. Moreover, the high level of cultural life, which they had enjoyed in their home country, was non-existent in Australia.[2] The distances in big cities also meant that commuting from home to work, in most cases, was time consuming. In order to supplement the family income, many of the women had to find employment, which would have been unthinkable and socially unacceptable in the circles they had moved in at home. These were all learning curves that brought about new skills and opened minds to new realities and new vistas.

In the process of settling in the refugees soon came to realize that these difficulties could be overcome and thus became aware of their own potential to contribute to their new country's development. This led to the renewal of confidence, which had been undermined as a result of their refugee experience in the recent past. Their experiences and the successes that they achieved in their new country following the end of the war are all testimony to their character and resilience.

Acculturation also meant coming to terms with the distinctive features of the Australian way of life. Integration into Australian society was challenging. Some Australians were not inclined to accept foreigners, in particular Jews, in spite of the fact that the tragedy of Czechoslovakia had aroused sympathy. For the older generation their rapprochement with members of the Australian population was slow and usually originated when establishing business contacts. In contrast, school children quickly learned the language and made friends with Australian children. Older students, particularly those who entered university, remained known as 'reffos' from whom Australian students kept their distance for decades even after the war came to an end.

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[1] Konrad Kwiet, 'Second time around: re-acculturation of German-Jewish refugees in Australia, *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 10/1 (2001), 34–49.

[2] Dümling, 'Uncovering Traces: German speaking refugee musicians in Australia'.

According to the people interviewed Czechoslovak Jews preferred to socialize amongst themselves. Remarkably, the linguistic divide that had existed between those who preferred to speak German and those who spoke Czech was no longer an issue after their arrival in Australia. Moreover, they had no problems relating to German and Austrian Jews. Given that they were mostly secularized, they usually did not associate with observant Australian Jews.

In spite of these difficulties, most of the immigrants appreciated the positive aspects of life in Australia: the mild climate in winter, the peaceful countryside and the tranquillity of the Australian suburbia, where class and social status were not decisive factors. Indeed, this was an important discovery. It was a novelty to the immigrants, whose lives had evolved within the walls of a European enclosure, governed by strict formalities in mutual relationships and where lines of social boundaries were not to be crossed, to find that many Australians were much more relaxed about such things. Their admiration of the easy-going ways of the Australians was one of the factors that helped them integrate into Australian society.

Their Stories

Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia came from diverse backgrounds and, depending on their circumstances prior to or following their arrival in Australia, the stories of their integration and assimilation vary. Those with professions and skills that were recognized and in demand in Australia were able to re-orientate and re-establish themselves in their new country relatively quickly. Others had to re-invent themselves professionally and gain experiences in solving hitherto unknown problems, the successful outcome of which depended on their personalities and the approach they took to adapting to their new environment. However, as the years went by, most Jewish refugees succeeded in adjusting to their new world.

When investigating the successful integration of Czechoslovak Jews in Australia, it is necessary to determine what was known about them, about their qualifications, the paths that led to their professional recognition in Australia, what benefits their expertise brought to their adopted country and what benefits they themselves gained. Some of these stories have been recorded in documents held in the National Archives of Australia, others in the Australian press and still others in independent studies. Other stories include those that I was privileged to record in interviews with former refugees, their spouses or descendants, recalling events that influenced the decisions they or their relatives had made.

Regretfully, by 2007 not many former refugees were alive to relate their stories and, therefore, I was not able to include a more comprehensive picture of immigration history of those who arrived from Czechoslovakia prior to and during the outbreak of the Second World War. However, the attitude of those whom I interviewed was, without exception, positive about their decision to settle in Australia. Almost all applied for Australian citizenship as soon as possible (after the mandatory five years). They were deeply affected by both the multitude of factors that led to their immigration to Australia as well as the loss of loved ones who perished in the Shoah, which they learnt about after the end of the war and with which they were never able to come to terms.

The recollections of Czechoslovak refugees form the core of this chapter: the place and time where their story originated, the challenges posed by the transition from their settled European lifestyles, from their position in society, their cultural heritage and advanced professional capabilities, to the less favourable conditions that were prevalent in Australia at the time of their arrival. Their stories highlight their struggles, particularly for recognition of their expertise to allow for the renewal and progression of their careers, as well as the adjustments they had to make in order to adapt to new circumstances. This part of the refugee story puts into perspective how the events surrounding the Czechoslovak tragedy influenced the lives of each individual as well as recording their satisfaction at having made the decision to settle in Australia, the country they came to love and became proud to be part of.

One area in which Czechoslovak Jewish refugees made significant contributions to Australia was in scientific endeavours. Most of these scientists experienced difficult beginnings. One exception was Dr Ernst Singer, whose integration into Australia's scientific community was a prime example of a refugee's early success story. Singer was Professor of Bacteriology at the German University in Prague where he was involved in the research of chemotherapy. When he arrived in Australia on 23 August 1939, *The Argus* published a short article introducing its readers to Dr Singer's work. He was immediately engaged by the Baker Research Institute in Melbourne where, according to the Seventeenth Annual Report of the Alfred Hospital for the Year ended 30 June 1940, he was engaged in 'the preservation of blood for transfusion purposes, treatment of gas gangrene infection by means of combined sulphanilamide and anti-toxic serum therapy, important to military authorities'.[3] There is, unfortunately, not much more known about Dr Singer's refugee experience, except that he was a colleague of another famous Jewish scientist, Dr Paul Fantl, a refugee from Austria. Both refugees were classified as 'scientists of enemy origin'.[4] Singer's rapid integration and success was rare but not singular.

In contrast, nowhere was the complexity of a refugee's experience more evident than in the case of another Jewish scientist. If one could encapsulate the transformation that affected the population of Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century – including events that impacted on their lives prior to, in the course of and in the aftermath of the Second World War – there is no better example than the refugee experience of Professor

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[3] I owe a debt of gratitude to Peter Frawley, the archivist of The Alfred and Caulfield Hospitals in Melbourne for supplying me with this information on 15 May 2013.

[4] NAA B1535 867/2/31, '(Scientists of Enemy Origin – Dr Paul Fantl and Dr Ernst Singer)', Item 380871.

Bruno Zdenko Breyer. Born in the Moravian town of Zábřeh in 1900 to a Czech mother and Yugoslav father, Breyer moved to Zagreb in Yugoslavia early in his life. There is some confusion surrounding his nationality in as much that he was considered a Yugoslav citizen, yet his file at the National Archives of Australia indicates that he was a Czechoslovak citizen, on the basis of his right of domicile in Czechoslovakia.

In the 1920s Breyer went to Germany where he graduated with a doctorate in science from the University of Bonn in 1928. After being granted German citizenship in 1929, he worked as a pharmacologist for I. G. Farben. However, following Hitler's rise to power, Breyer realized that his prospects for advancement were unlikely as a Jew and he returned to Yugoslavia in 1933. From Yugoslavia he moved to Italy where he worked as a scientist at the University of Padua, later graduating in paediatric medicine. After the introduction of Mussolini's anti-Jewish legislation Breyer left Italy for Switzerland and then relocated with his wife Marthe to Britain in 1939 where his scientific credentials drew the attention of Professor Erich Keightley Rideal of the Department of Colloid Science at the University of Cambridge. Given the opportunity to work with him, Breyer built a polarograph, the first of its kind in Britain. Apart from that he was also involved in the research of sulphonamide drugs.

As a former German, now stateless citizen, Breyer was detained in Cambridge in May 1940, transported on the *Dunera* to Australia and interned at Tatura. His case came to the attention of Major Layton, who succeeded in having Breyer released in 1941. At first, Breyer was eager to return to Britain to join his wife, but he was prevented from doing so due to the lack of shipping facilities during the war. At that time, Breyer's professional qualifications came to the attention of the Australian National Research Council, which offered to assist him. It was as a result of the intervention of Professor Eric Ashby of the Department of Botany and Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher that his employment in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Sydney was secured. Nevertheless, he was still considered an enemy alien who needed security clearance prior to and during his tenure at the University of Sydney.

Although Breyer was registered by the Jewish Refugee Committee at Bloomsbury House in London, his registration papers as an internee sent

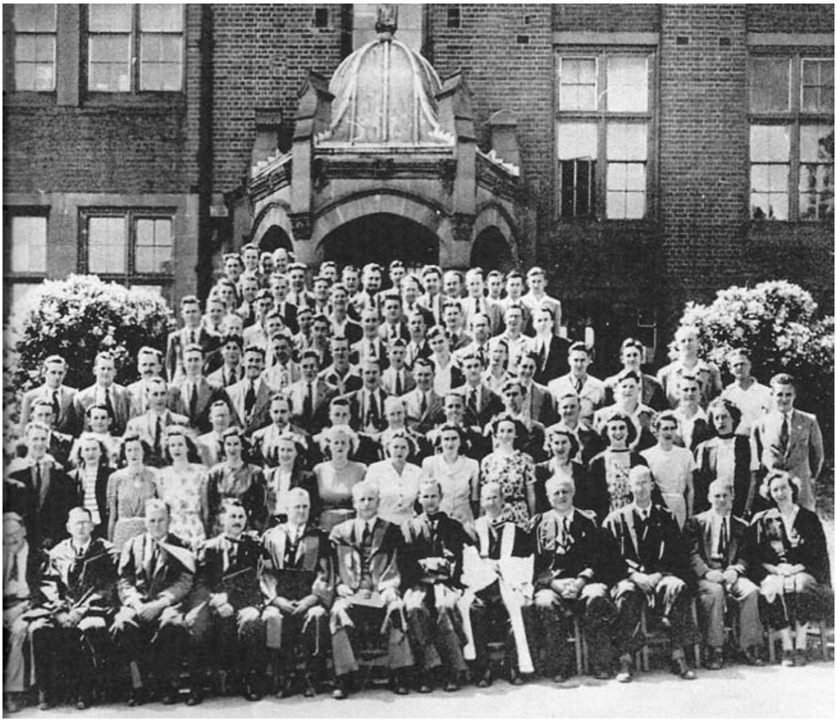

Figure 10.1: Dr Bruno Zdenko Breyer, front row, fourth on the right.
Source: Courtesy of Nyree Morrison, Archives of the University of Sydney.

from the UK to Australia indicate that he was a Roman Catholic. His order of restriction was revoked in August 1944 and he became a naturalized Australian citizen in June 1945.[5] Breyer later held the position of Associate Professor of Agricultural Chemistry at the University of Sydney. He was a world authority on alternating current, polarography and tensammetry, as well as a medical scientist. He died in Milan in 1967.[6]

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[5] NAA A367, C575576, 'Breyer Bruno Zdenko', Item 780691.

[6] See 'Breyer, Burno Zdenko (1900–1967)', *Encyclopedia of Australian Science*. <http://www.eoas.info/biogs/P002832b.htm> and 'Obituary: Bruno Zdenko Breyer 1900–1967', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Chemical Institute* 35/4 (1968), 80.

The success stories for two other Jewish refugees who arrived in Australia during the war are in no small measure due to the high standards of scientific and engineering professionalism for which Czechoslovak university graduates were known. Although they did not know each other in Czechoslovakia, their backgrounds and the impact of the Holocaust on both Kurt Gottlieb and Francis Lord were very similar. During their voyage to Australia their paths crossed and they later shared parallel experiences in Australia during the war. They were both determined to succeed in their new homeland and upgrade their qualifications in order to enhance their prospects for employment. Although after the war in 1946 the two refugees decided to go their separate ways in terms of their careers they nevertheless remained lifelong friends.

Gottlieb was born in Graz, Austria, on 5 October 1910. His family then moved to the town of Nový Jičín in Moravia where they established a prosperous tailoring business and became active members of the small Jewish community. Gottlieb's parents encouraged him to become a tailor because they needed a person with qualifications for their business. He agreed, provided that he could later study engineering. After graduating as an engineer (and also qualifying as a tailor), Gottlieb worked in a turbine factory until Hitler's rise to power in neighbouring Germany put an end to his aspirations. Nový Jičín was part of the Sudetenland and the family bore the brunt of vicious antisemitic attacks, which saw the destruction of Jewish life, culminating with the Kristallnacht. By that time, however, Gottlieb had already applied for admission to several countries, including Australia. His foreboding about the future was realized when his father lost all hope, and rather risk than being captured by the Germans, committed suicide. Gottlieb was himself arrested and beaten after the German invasion of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939.[7] His refugee odyssey began when he left Prague on 2 December 1939. Travelling through Munich to

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[7] Wolf Gruner and Jörg Osterloh, eds, *Das Großdeutsche Reich und die Juden* (*The Greater German Reich and the Jews*) (Frankfurt am Main: Wissenschaftliche Reihe des Fritz Bauers Instituts, 2010). A written version of Kurt's story was provided to me by his daughter Miriam Barasch and I owe Miriam and her brother Paul Gottlieb my gratitude for having made it possible for me to include his story in this chapter.

Milan, carrying a briefcase and dressed as a businessman, he hid in a toilet on the border crossing. In Milan he joined his cousin's family who had arrived from Vienna. While waiting for a landing permit to be approved, he made ends meet as a child portrait photographer together with his cousin

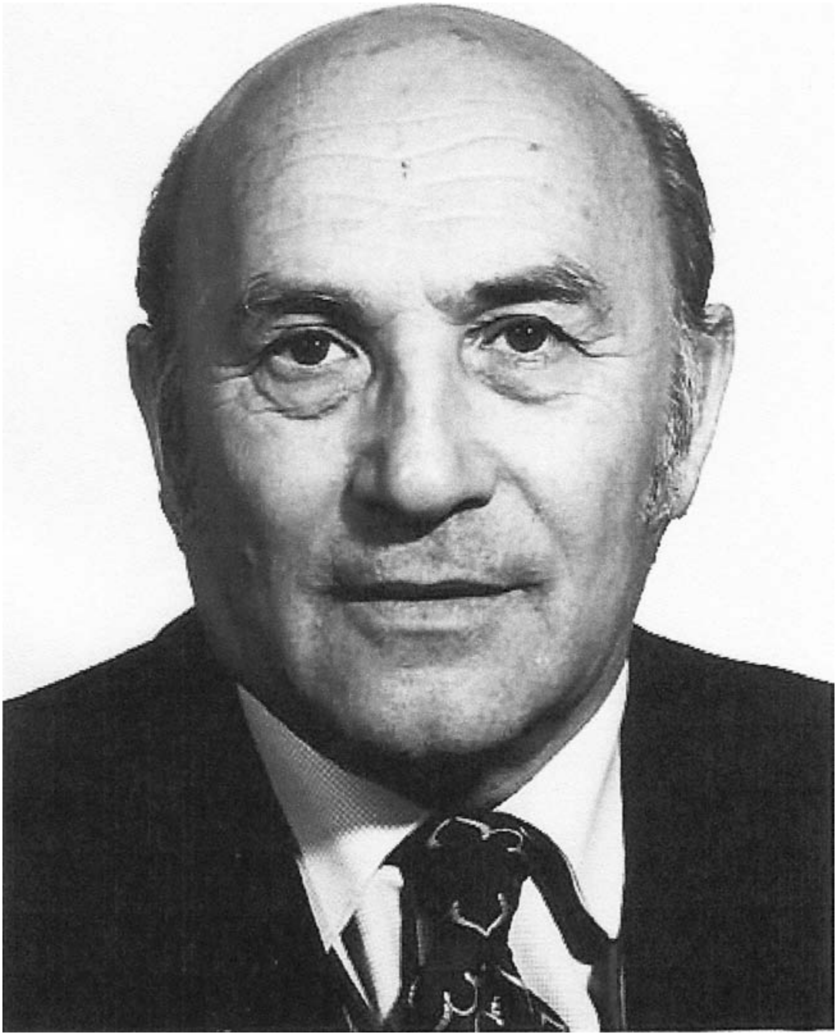

Figure 10.2: Dr Kurt Gottlieb 1910–1995. Source: Courtesy of Paul Gottlieb and Miriam Barash.

while at the same time applying for immigration visas to various countries for his mother. A visa for his mother never came through, although on 12 February 1940 Gottlieb's landing permit for Australia did. His sister Hilde (who had found refuge with her husband in London) provided funds for his fare and landing permit. Two weeks later he was on board the *Esquilino*, which was to take him to Sydney. By chance, Gottlieb and Lord met on board, sharing a cabin.

The Jewish Welfare Society in Sydney showed only scant interest in both Gottlieb and Lord. However, Dr Richard Woolley, the Director of the Mount Stromlo Observatory in Canberra, became aware of their engineering skills and offered both positions at the Mount Stromlo Observatory. Throughout the war they worked designing and building equipment in the optical munitions factory. They contributed significantly to Australia's war effort through projects that led to the production of military gun-sights and range finders.

Gottlieb married Isley Turner in 1943. During the war, news from his mother, who had moved to Prague to stay with her sister, became less and less frequent. She was deported to Terezín on 24 July 1942 and from there to Rassika in Estonia where she was murdered on 5 September 1942 by Estonian guards. For the rest of his life Gottlieb lived with the guilt that he had been unable to save his mother.

In the years that followed his settlement in Australia, Gottlieb was very successful. He became a research fellow at the Mount Stromlo Observatory, and at the Australian National University specializing in astronomical instrumentation. Amongst his many scientific achievements in October 1957 he used one of the telescopes at Mount Stromlo to take the first photograph of the first artificial earth satellite Sputnik I. Gottlieb was also a founding member of the ACT Jewish Community and later its president. He took great pride in being an Australian citizen and was eternally grateful to Australia for giving him the chance to rebuild his life. He passed away in 1995.[8]

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8 On Gottlieb's contribution to the development of optical instrumentation during the war and his work on the Mount Stromlo Observatory, see Tim Sherratt and Anne-Marie Condé, *A wartime observatory observed* (Canberra: Australian Science

There are many similarities to Gottlieb's experiences in the story of Francis (František) Lord, although Lord's early years were different. Lord was born in 1916 in Opava in northern Moravia. His father died when he was ten years old. He was multilingual, speaking Czech, German and French. His mother encouraged him to become an engineer and in 1934 he left for Paris where he studied optical engineering. In 1937 he was employed by the Srb and Štýs optical firm in Prague, which produced optical hardware for export. In March 1939 Lord was designated 'betriebswichtiger Jude' that is a Jew whose professional qualifications were important to the economy and thus he obtained permission from the Gestapo to remain in his job and to conduct business in Rumania. A chance encounter with a friend who had applied for an Australian landing permit led Lord to do likewise. His application was approved in June 1939. In October 1939 he obtained a German passport marked with the letter J.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, the Australian government cancelled the previously issued landing permits. Lord had neither any transit visas by which to reach European ports nor a boat ticket. Having had his landing permit renewed and his passport stamped by a friend who was the Slovak Consul in Prague, he was eventually able to leave for Bratislava where his family resided. His sister then travelled to Budapest where she obtained a new landing permit for him and purchased a ticket from the Lloyd Triestino shipping company. Unfortunately her application for an Australian landing permit for her family was rejected. A new obstacle then emerged when Hungarian authorities refused to issue transit visas to Jews and as a result Lord was unable to leave Bratislava. He overcame this problem by joining an illegal transport proceeding to Palestine. Having successfully crossed the Hungarian frontier, he was apprehended in Budapest by a policeman whom he bribed. He was locked in a toilet overnight, given bread and tea in the morning and encouraged to catch the first available train to Yugoslavia. When he finally reached Genoa in Italy he retrieved the £208 sterling from a suitcase that had been forwarded by his sister and was thus able to pay for his landing permit before boarding

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Archives Project, 1996). See also 'Gottlieb, Kurt (1910–1995)', *The Encyclopedia of Australian Science* <http://www.eoas.info/biogs/P002745b.htm>.

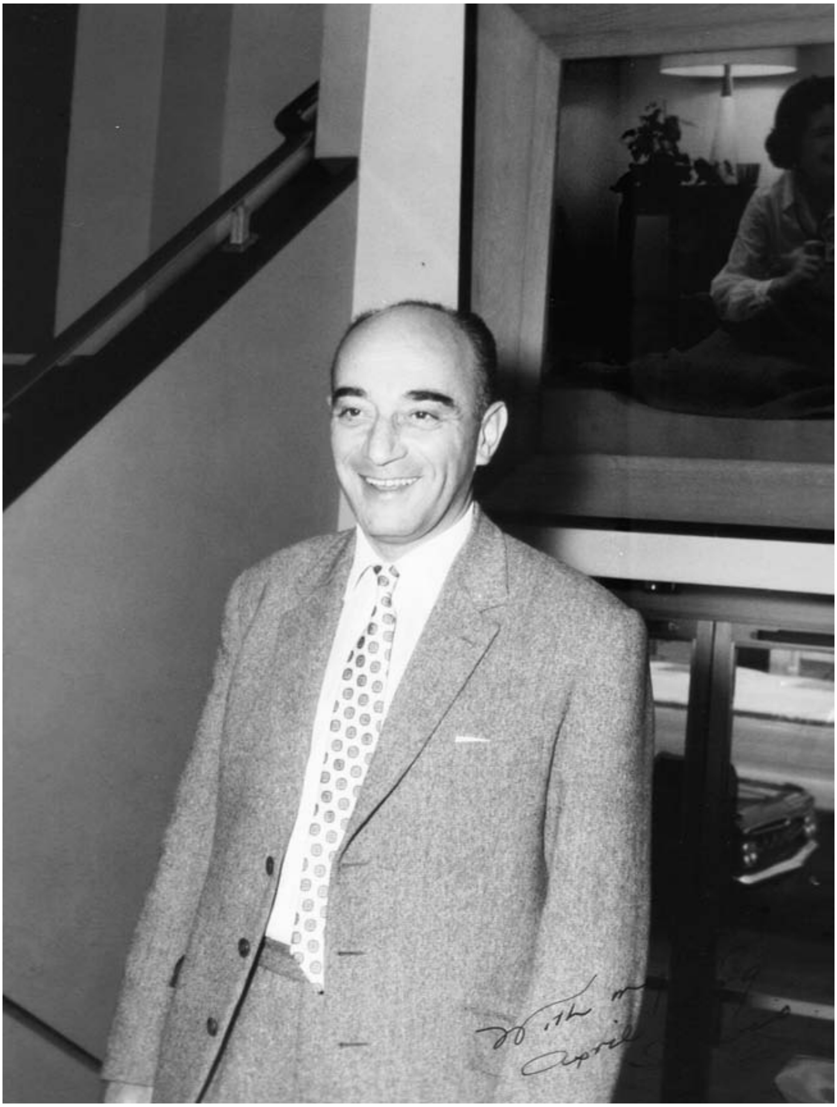
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Figure 10.3: Francis Lord 1916–2010. Source: Courtesy of Eva Gertler.

the *Esquilino* on 29 February 1940 where he shared a cabin with Gottlieb. At this time he was also able to help a Viennese couple, who were ready to board the ship but were short of £5 by paying the sum on their behalf.

Lord arrived in Sydney on 20 April 1940 and immediately began looking for work. He was critical of the AJWS, which took no interest in his situation. After several failed attempts, he succeeded in finding employment with the British Optical Company. Some of his colleagues suspected that he was a German spy due to the fact that he had an English name but did not speak English well. Although his boss was convinced that Lord was a genuine immigrant, he had to dismiss him because other staff threatened to take strike action. Having paid Lord an extra month's salary, his now ex-boss then arranged for him to be employed at the Mount Stromlo Observatory in Canberra, while at the same time organizing security clearance for him from the police. At the Mount Stromlo Observatory he met up again with Kurt Gottlieb.

Lord's expertise had a profound impact on the development of optical instrumentation in Australia. His contribution was acknowledged in the fifth volume of the *Australian War History*.[9] In 1946 he left the Observatory together with Hans Meyer, a German Jewish optical expert with connections to Czechoslovakia, who had arrived on the *Dunera* and had been released from internment at Hay. Together they established the Francis Lord Optics Company in Sydney, producing optical lenses and importing photographic equipment for television broadcasts and ground support equipment for aircraft. He also collaborated with Professor Leo Dintenfass of the Physics Department of the University of Sydney and was involved in haematology research and research for NASA. Moreover, he represented MEOPTA, the Czechoslovak optical company in Australia and received a gold medal from the Prague Chamber of Commerce. Interestingly, Lord met Consul Solanský on several occasions and found him very pleasant, as is evident from a letter he received from Solanský on 31 December 1942.

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[9] David P. Meller, 'Optical Munitions', in *Second World War Official History*, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945*, Series 4 – Civil, vol. V – The Role of Science and Industry (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1958), 259. See also 'Lord, Francis (1916–2010)', *The Encyclopedia of Australian Science* <http://www.eoas.info/biogs/P003057b.htm>.

After the war Francis married Gerty Angel, a Jewish refugee from Vienna, who was studying medicine at the University of Sydney.

Lord's mother, as well as the sister who had been refused an Australian landing permit and her husband all perished during the Shoah. Only their young son survived, hidden during the war by a Slovak couple, who handed him over to Francis' other sister and her husband. Having survived internment in a concentration camp, they adopted the boy and immigrated with him to Australia. Lord led a fulfilled and happy life in Australia and passed away on 2 October 2010 at the age of ninety-four.[10]

Professor Emerita Helen Hughes arrived in Australia at the age of eleven. Her father, Dr Karel Gintz, applied for a landing permit for the family and with the assistance of the honorary Czechoslovak Consul in Melbourne obtained it in 1937. According to Hughes, her father thought that it would be a good idea to possess one, 'just in case'. When the Germans occupied Prague in March 1939, he bribed a Gestapo official to obtain exit visas, thus enabling the family to leave for Britain in June 1939. Six weeks later they boarded the *Dominion Monarch*, arriving in Fremantle on 2 September 1939 and Melbourne on 6 September 1939. They would have heard that war had broken out while sailing from Fremantle to Melbourne. Ten years later, in 1949, Hughes graduated with an Honours degree from the University of Melbourne, followed in 1951 with an MA (Hons) degree and in 1954 a PhD from the London School of Economics. Unable to secure a job in academia, she worked from 1955 to 1958 as an economist in private business. From 1959 to 1960 she worked at the University of New South Wales and later, in 1961–1962, as a senior lecturer in economics at the University of Queensland. From 1969 to 1983 she worked for the World Bank in Washington DC. In 1983, she took up the position of Director of the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University. Finally, from 1987 to 1993 she was a member of the United Nations Committee for Development Planning. She was also a Senior Fellow of the Centre for Independent Studies in Sydney.

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[10] On Francis Lord's contribution to the development of optical instrumentation during the war and his work on the Mount Stromlo Observatory see Sherratt and Condé, *A wartime observatory observed.*

Figure 10.4: Professor Emerita Helen Hughes 1924–2013. Source: Courtesy Robert Duong, Fairfax Syndicate.

Hughes was passionate about many issues, particularly the improvement of all aspects of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people, especially in the areas of education and health, without which, in her opinion, they would be unable to become equal members of Australian society.[11] She was against the distribution of welfare benefits in developed countries, which in her opinion were at the core of economic regression. According to her, people should not be given handouts because they are thus encouraged to rely on government support for their survival, taking away their initiative to seek education, professional development and interest in furthering their careers. Hughes was also concerned about the consequences of economic handouts on the inhabitants of the Pacific islands, as well as African countries. She believed aid from developed countries contributed to the collapse of local economies, led to civil wars and widespread corruption. She insisted that it was of paramount importance for new immigrants to learn English in order to release themselves from the poverty cycle. At the same time, however, she stressed that the financial outlay for learning English should not come from taxpayer money. It is fair to say that there was not one issue of significance to the economic and social environment of Australia and overseas that escaped her expert analysis. She was the author of eighteen books, including countless academic texts and participated in discussions on a variety of subjects aimed at alerting politicians, academics, journalists and the public to consequences of misconstrued government policies.

Hughes passed away on 15 June 2013, having devoted her life to dealing with issues that were of concern to Australia and the world during the second half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Her vision for Australia's direction and her non-conformist insight into political, social and economic trends made her one of the most distinguished scholars in Australia's history. She was made Officer of the Order of Australia in 1985 and awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001. In her obituary, Damien Murphy called her Australia's greatest female economist.[12]

Associate Professor Julie Moscheles was another female scientist who reached Australia during the war. While there is only scant archival material

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[11] Helen Hughes, 'Aboriginal Genocide' <https://sites.google.com/site/aboriginal genocide/hughes-helen>.

[12] Damien Murphy, 'Champion of Social Justice', *SMH* (21 June 2013).

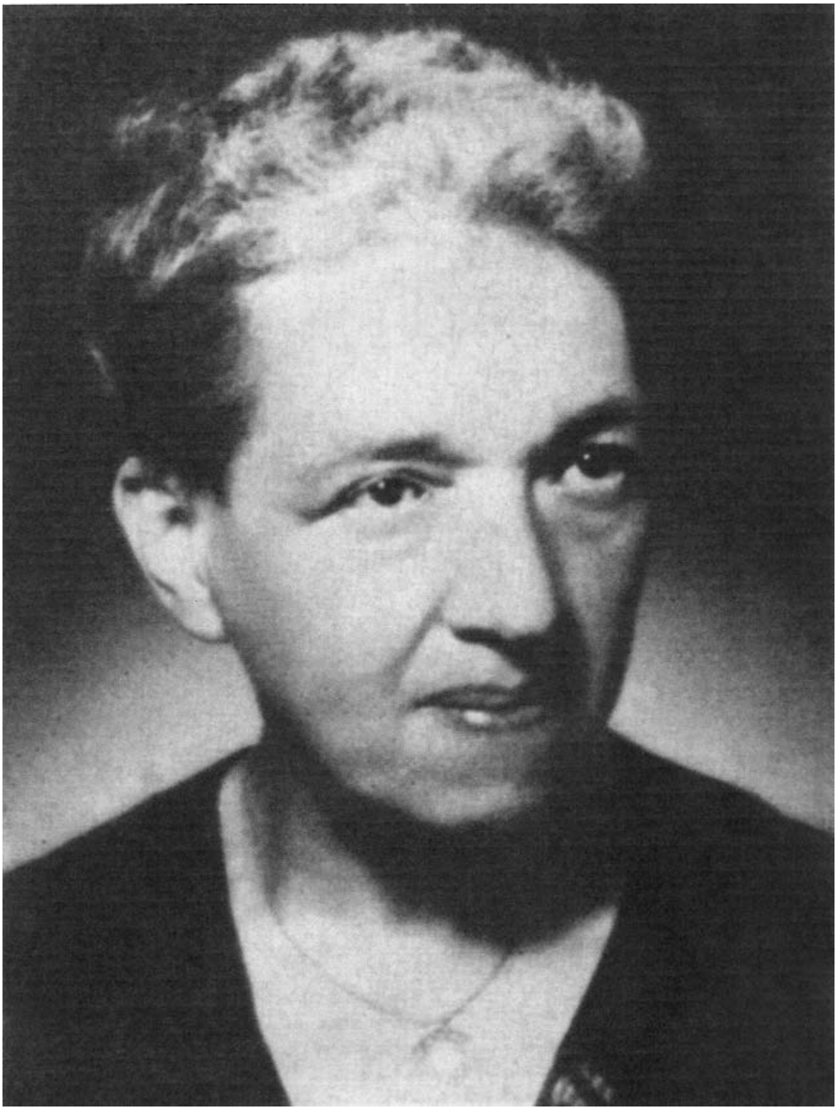

Figure 10.5: Dr Julie Moscheles 1892–1956. Source: Courtesy of Dr Jiří Martínek.

available on her life we do know she was an eminent geographer. The summary of her life, her scientific achievements in Czechoslovakia and in several European countries before the war and in Australia during war is based on material that was compiled by the Czech historian Jiří Martínek.[13]

Moscheles was born in Prague in 1892 into a prosperous Jewish family. She was intelligent, diligent and motivated. She spoke German, English, French and Scandinavian languages. Yet, her life did not turn out the way she and her family would have expected. Her mother was blind and so she was brought up by English relatives in London, where she attended school. She later travelled with her foster parents throughout Europe and North Africa, during which time she met the Norwegian geologist Hans Henrik Reusch who employed her as a secretary and translator at the Institute of Geology in Oslo. Her knowledge of geography later attracted the attention of Alfred Grund, a visiting professor of geography at the German University in Prague. Keen on pursuing a career in science, Moscheles enrolled at the university in the autumn of 1912 to study geography, geology and meteorology. When she graduated in 1916, her Jewish origins were recorded on her graduation papers.

In 1918 Moscheles published *Das Klima von Prag* (*The Climate of Prague*) and *Das Klima von Bosnien und Hercegovina* (*The Climate of Bosnia and Herzegovina*), in which she presented the results of her study of meteorology in the two regions. She was later targeted by National Socialist students at the faculty and therefore left the German university in 1922. She transferred to the Czech University where she found it difficult to advance professionally, in spite of her interest in physical geography and geomorphology. In 1934 she became associate professor of anthropogeography, and her research focused on the effect of socio-economic and political circumstances on various geographical regions in Czechoslovakia and, later, in the British Isles. Not fully recognized in her native country, her published works were highly regarded abroad. She lectured at British universities and was a member of several scientific associations not only at home but also in Britain and France, where she received the Gaudy Medal of the Société de Géographie Commerciale in Paris in 1930. Her achievements were instrumental in enabling her to escape to safety after the German invasion of Czecho-Slovakia in March 1939.[14] With the help of the British Institute of Sociology she succeeded in reaching Australia on 14 February 1940. Two weeks later she was offered a position at the Faculty of Commerce of the University of Melbourne. It was at this time that the Japanese overran the Dutch East Indies and the Dutch government in exile and the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS) were established in Melbourne.[15] Moscheles was recruited to serve with NEFIS.[16] As a member of the Allied Geographical Service she produced a bibliography on the geography of what is today Indonesia.

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[13] Jiří Martínek, 'Radost z poznání nemusí vést k uznání, Julie Moschelesová' (The joy of knowledge need not lead to recognition, Julie Moschelesová), in Jiří Martínek and Pavla Vošahlíková, eds, *Cesty k samostatnosti, Portréty žen v éře modernizaze* (*The roads to independence; Portraits of women in the era of modernization*) (Prague: Institute of History, 2010), 176–190. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr Martínek for his comments and his permission to include the story of Julie Moscheles in this book.

An important milestone in her life was meeting Dr Grethe Hjorth, an influential and highly regarded Danish academic at the University of Melbourne with whom Julie entered into a close friendship during the war. After the war ended, concern for the fate of members of her family who had stayed behind in Prague was crucial in her decision to leave Australia and return to Czechoslovakia in 1946 together with Hjorth. Moscheles was overcome by guilt when she discovered that she was the only member of her family to have survived the war. Unable to find decent accommodation and scarcely able to make ends meet, she was, more often than not, also ostracized for being a Jew in the changing atmosphere of Czechoslovakia after 1948.[17] She became deeply depressed and reliant on Hjorth for survival. In spite of these appalling circumstances, she continued working on her monograph about Australia, which she unfortunately did not complete. Impoverished, Julie succumbed to cancer on 7 January 1956. Moscheles, to my knowledge, was the only Jewish migrant from Czechoslovakia who returned to her country following the end of the war.

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[14] Moscheles obtained permission from the German Police Headquarters in Prague in August 1939 to travel to New Guinea and Australia. The German Embassy in London was also instructed to extend the validity of her passport. Letter from the Presidium of Police Headquarters in Prague, 9 August 1939, NA, P 1941–1950, sign, M345/4 (Julie), 1931–1940.

[15] Australian War Memorial, *Allies in Adversity, Australia and the Dutch in the Pacific War*, Exhibition 2006 <https://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/alliesinadversity/>.

[16] I owe my gratitude to Katie Wood, Archivist, Curator, Malcolm Fraser Collection, University of Melbourne.

The stories of refugee scientists from Czechoslovakia, who settled in Australia and succeeded in developing their skills in their new homeland, leaves no one in any doubt about their contribution to Australia's post-war development. In addition, there were other refugees, whose challenges were likewise daunting but who also made significant contributions to other areas of endeavour in their adopted country. Amongst them is Dr Karel Josef Koenig who was a Sudeten German Social Democrat.[18] His story, too, is a reflection of the tumultuous events of the twentieth century and their impact on an individual.

Koenig was born on 11 February 1898 in the town of Broumov. His mother was Jewish and his father was Roman Catholic. Karel and his brother Robert were educated by the Benedictine Brothers. Following the end of the First World War, in which he served as a commissioned officer, Koenig enrolled at the German University in Prague, graduating with a degree in law in 1921. In 1922 he settled in Karlovy Vary, where in 1926 he established his own legal practice. In 1932 he married Julia Wohllisch, an attractive Jewish woman who bore him two sons, Hansi and Pauli. During a trip to Germany in 1937 to defend a client in court, Koenig witnessed a Nazi rally at Nuremberg and became alarmed. Upon his return home, concerned about the safety of his family, he suggested to Julia that she should leave Karlovy Vary and move to Prague. When Karel left Karlovy Vary later to take up army duty, Julia applied for a divorce.

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[17] Moscheles' father Wilhelm, who was a solicitor, and her mother Aloisie were forced to move from one place to another until they left Prague on 25 August 1942 on transport to a concentration camp. NA, P, PŘ 1941–1950, sign. M345/4 (Julie), 1931–1940, sign. M3096/4 Vilém Moscheles.

[18] I would like to express my appreciation to Koenig's daughter-in-law Kay Koenig who gave me an account of his life, followed by his biography entitled *Voices from his Suitcase: The Life of Karel Joseph Koenig, 1898–1994* (Sydney: Kay Koenig, 2009).

In May 1938 Koenig was appointed Judge of the Administrative Court in Prague and in August his marriage was dissolved. Following the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany, Julia refused to leave Karlovy Vary, which became part of the German Reich. When Czecho-Slovakia ceased to exist in March 1939, Koenig was warned that his arrest was imminent. With the help of the St Raphael Society he obtained a false passport and made his way to the Polish border where a Czech guide, who was to take him across the frontier, was shot dead. Koenig, however, managed to save himself by running through the forest. He stayed in Poland for three weeks and then sailed from Gdansk to Britain, from where he made two requests to Julia to send the boys to Britain on a Winton transport. Unfortunately, Julia refused.

By the end of 1939, Koenig had been able to find employment at the Purley School of Commerce and Languages, teaching German and Latin. Having been expelled from Karlovy Vary, Julia and the boys had by then moved to Prague where they joined Koenig's mother Hedwig and his sister. Correspondence, sent through the Red Cross during the war, ceased in December 1941.

In June 1940 Koenig was detained as an enemy alien and transported on the *Dunera* to Australia. He was interned in Hay and Tatura before later being released. Having volunteered to join the 8th Employment Company, he was discharged from the AIF in 1942 on medical grounds. Soon afterward he met Katherine Young, daughter of Koenig's doctor. In 1944 Koenig won a scholarship to study law at the University of Sydney. After the war came to an end, his brother Robert, who had served as a medical officer in the British army, informed him that their mother was murdered in Maly Trostenec. Lilly and the children were murdered in Chelmno.

Koenig was naturalized in 1947. That year he married Katherine Young and graduated from the University of Sydney as a solicitor and notary. In 1951 he opened a legal practice in Sydney. He was an active member of the International Law Society, dealing primarily with legal cases of fellow refugees. He also developed an interest in International Mining Law of the Sea. He retired in 1979 but remained a notary until he was ninety years old. He was involved with the Good Neighbour Council and received an MBE in 1980 for his services. He passed away in 1994 at the age of

Figure 10.6: Dr Karl Josef Koenig 1898–1994. Source: Courtesy of Kay Koenig.

ninety-six. Koenig's story is nothing less than remarkable. He came close to physical and mental destruction several times not only because of his political convictions, his Jewish roots and his near fatal escape to Poland, but also on account of his anguish over the fate of his Jewish mother and his former wife and children, whom he could have saved had he been given the opportunity to do so. Koenig succeeded in overcoming these hurdles and re-establishing himself in his profession, raising a new family and committing his services to Australia, a country he loved.

Another Jewish refugee from Czechoslovakia whose successful integration had an enormous impact on Australia was Paul Alexander Morawetz. His biography, entitled *What a Life: A Biography of Paul Morawetz* was written by Gloria Frydman, who was commissioned by Morawetz to do so.[19] This summary of his life is based on her book as well as archival material gathered at the Institute of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk in Prague. Morawetz was born on 10 November 1914 in Innsbruck. He moved to Prague with his family in 1922 where his father became the managing director of the second largest bank in Czechoslovakia, the Bohemian Union Bank. Wealthy and privileged, his family was secular. In his own words 'Jewish of sorts but we would have disappeared as Jews had there been no Hitler'.[20] As a result of Hitler's rise to power, the family's perception of their situation underwent a change. At that point in time Paul began working for the Baťa shoe conglomerate. Later he took up a position at the Škoda works, becoming involved in the export of the company's quality military hardware. In February 1938 he was sent overseas, accompanied by his wife Dita, to negotiate contracts with clients in Asia. During this business trip his charisma and commanding personality made an impact amongst the elite of Asian societies.

In 1939 his family left Czechoslovakia. His sister settled in the United States, one of his brothers in Canada and another brother in Ibiza in Spain. Paul and Dita escaped to Australia in 1940 because it was the closest country to the Far East where they were posted with the Škoda and Baťa industrial conglomerates. As their passports were no longer valid, they had to apply for German passports in Singapore. Their new passports bore the letter 'J' and the names Israel and Sarah were added to their own. However, being unwilling to travel on German passports, they were then successful in obtaining a British laissez-passer.[21]

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[19] Frydman, *What a Life: A Biography of Paul Morawetz* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1995).

[20] Ibid. 20.

[21] Ibid. 48–50.

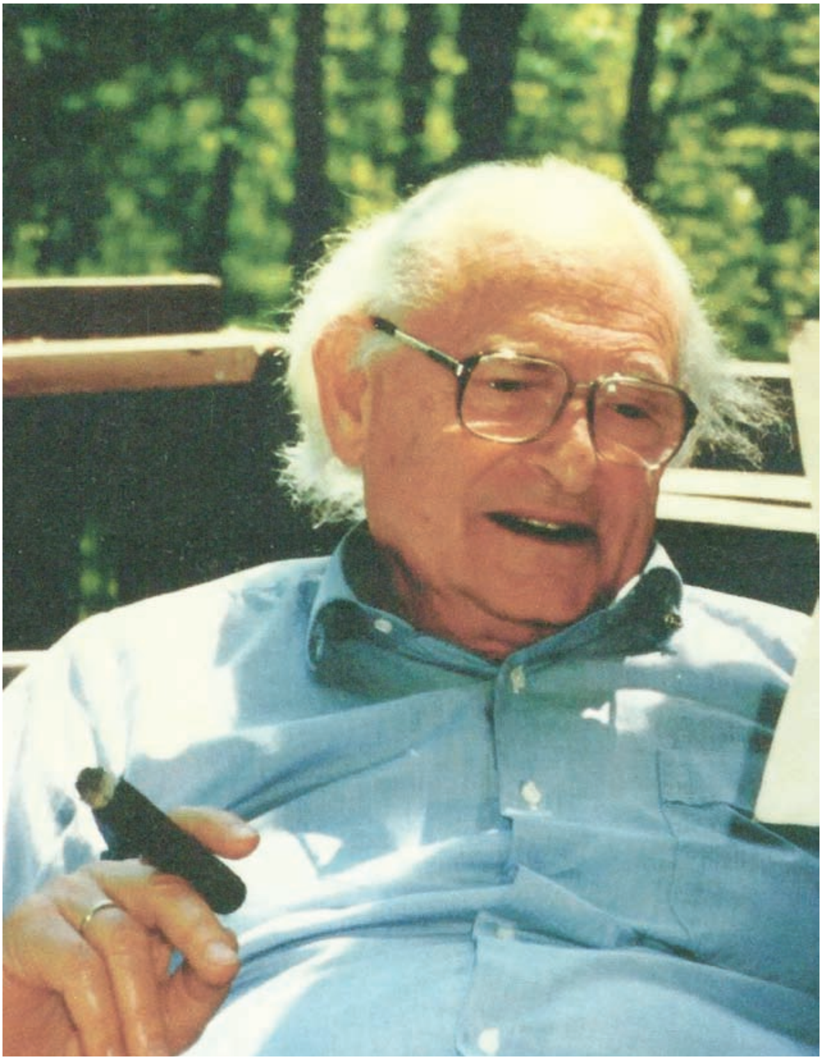

Figure 10.7: Paul Morawetz 1914–2001. Source: Courtesy of Judy Avisar.

The couple arrived in Australia on 19 February 1940 on the *Kitano Maru* with £2,000 in their possession. It was then that Paul's Austrian origin proved to be a liability because he was classified as an enemy alien in Australia. His life was disrupted by the surveillance imposed by the

Department of Internal Security and by the Allied Works Council, which ordered him to report for forest work in Mildura. At this time he was working night shifts as a radio monitor for the Listening Post, under the guidance of McMahon-Ball who was aware of his potential and tried to protect him from internment, and was at the same time trying to establish his own company – Tip Top Paints.[22]

Morawetz decided to engage the legal firm Slater and Gordon to take up his case and requested the assistance of Solanský. The Czech Consul obliged by contacting his government in London. In a series of cables sent during 1943 and 1944, Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk and Minister for State Hubert Ripka, instructed Solanský to issue Paul and Dita with interim Czechoslovak passports valid for one year in recognition of Morawetz's previous services and his positive attitude towards Czechoslovak resistance.[23] His case was eventually dismissed in October 1944 although he continued to be kept under surveillance by Australia's Secret Intelligence Organization (ASIO) for many years. In spite of this, he was entrusted with diplomatic missions, making friends with politicians and prominent personalities in Australia and overseas. He travelled to places that few tourists would have been interested in visiting. Moreover, he promoted musical life in Australia, becoming Honorary Secretary of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, established a close relationship with Arthur Calwell[24] and supported the Zionist cause. He was a person to whom obstacles were no impediment, overcoming all of them with courage. He passed away in April 2001.[25]

Not all Jewish refugees who arrived from Czechoslovakia in Australia became wealthy, famous or influential. Yet, their stories are just as important as the ones mentioned above because they demonstrate the individual's

[22] Ibid. 63.

[23] AŮTGM, EB II/1, IV 'Cables sent in 1943 and 1944'. See also Frydman, *What a Life: A Biography of Paul Morawetz*, 67. For guidance on the issue of Czechoslovak passports to foreigners, see Hubert Ripka's letter to all consular representatives of the Czechoslovak Republic, sent from London, 17 November 1941.

[24] Arthur Calwell (1896–1973) was Australia's First Minister for Immigration in 1945 and leader of the ALP in Opposition in 1960.

[25] I am grateful to Paul Morawetz's daughter Judy Avisar for filling me in on details of her father's life.

reactions to the diverse refugee experience. Their stories illustrate the fates of ordinary, middle class people and their families. They tell of the satisfaction these people felt in having settled in a country that gave them a chance to live happy and successful lives. One such story is that of Charlotte (Lotte) and Kurt Glaser.

Glaser's father Otto was a factory owner in the town of Žatec. Kurt was born on 24 November 1906. Marie and Otto Glaser were a middle-class couple who lived a comfortable life. They were not religious, but both Kurt and his brother Walter were 'B'nei Mitzva'. Following Kurt's graduation from high school (Gymnasium), at the age of nineteen he went to Krakow where he worked as a clerk. In July 1937 he married Lotte, who was born on 3 January 1910 in Liberec in northern Bohemia. Her father, Dr Vítězslav (Siegfried) Freund was a medical practitioner.

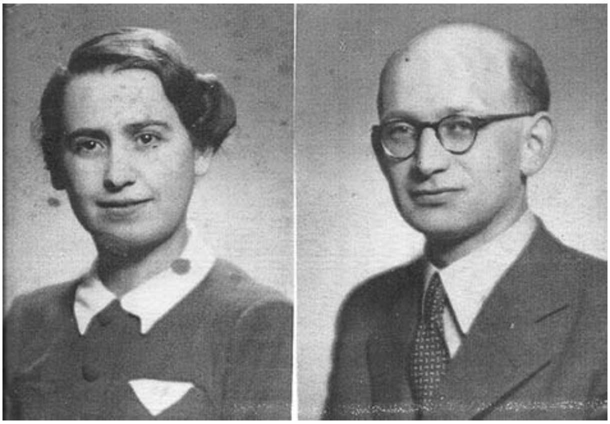

Figure 10.8: Lotte Glaser 1910–2007 and Kurt Glaser 1906–1980.
Source: Courtesy of Margaret Foster.

Although their native language was German and neither of them spoke Czech, they were Czechoslovak citizens according to the citizenship certificates Kurt secured in October 1936 and Lotte in April 1938. These documents were of immense value during the refugee crisis following the cession of the Sudetenland to Hitler (of which Žatec and Liberec were part) and after the German invasion in March 1939. Living in Prague at that point in time, they could prove that their domicile was in Czecho-Slovakia.

The Glasers realized by 1938 that their lives would be threatened should they remain in the country. For this reason, they were determined to emigrate, preferably to the United States. When their applications for visas were not successful, they instead decided to apply for admission to Australia.[26] What followed was a race against time to comply with all bureaucratic requirements the Germans imposed on Jews wishing to emigrate. In April 1939, the Glasers obtained their Australian landing permits. Because they were both born in the Sudetenland, they were classified as refugees and thus qualified for a grant of £200 from the CRTF to pay for their landing permits.[27] They therefore collected the allotted sum from the British Legation in Prague and completed additional documents required by Protectorate authorities. The Glasers left Naples on the *Ormonde*, together with Kurt's brother Walter and sister-in-law Anna, arriving in Sydney on 20 September 1939. Although Kurt was classified as an 'enemy alien' he was not interned. Together with his brother he opened a delicatessen in Rose Bay in 1940. Lotte's parents and sister all perished in the Holocaust.

The Glasers mixed with other German-speaking refugees. After closing their delicatessen, Kurt worked for Albert Scheinberg, producing handbags. He then found employment with the Grand United Health Fund. Their two daughters, Helen and Margaret, lived a happy childhood and did not want for anything. In 1946, they received a letter from Růžena Hořejší, a Czech family friend who writes the following: 'I have always admired you for the foresight and the wisdom which led you to leave the country in time'.[28] Lotte's brother Ludvík changed his name from Freund to Frejka. An outstanding economist and high-ranking communist official, he did not share the wisdom of his sister. He was hanged in 1952, together with another twelve co-accused in the infamous Slánský trial, when fourteen communist leaders, including eleven Jews, were accused of a Troskyite-

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[26] I would like to express my appreciation to Margaret Foster for providing information on her parents' refugee experience.

[27] The names of Kurt and Walter Glaser, and their spouses Charlotte (Lotte) and Anna, appear on the ledger of the Národní banka. See NA, P, Ministerstvo práce a sociální péče-repatriace, 1146, Karton 351, R 422 'Podpora vystěhovalců do jednotlivých zemí'.

[28] Letter from Růžena Hořejší to Charlotte Glaser, date 14 July 1946, Courtesy of Margaret Foster.

Titoite Zionist conspiracy. Lotte therefore had to face the tragic outcome of two totalitarian regimes that robbed her of her closest family members.

The search for safety and escape from Czechoslovakia are common themes that run through the stories of those who succeeded in making their way to Australia and each individual story helps to shed light on the migration experience. Another refugee who made it to Australia is Vera Bonyhady. Having arrived in Australia aged thirteen, her memories provide a young person's perspective on the emigration experience. Vera was born in Rychnov nad Kněžnou in 1926. Her parent's marriage ended in divorce, but her mother remarried in 1933. Her stepfather, who had a son from a previous marriage, was an Austrian Jewish dentist and Vera and her mother moved to Vienna where the family enjoyed a good life. Not religious, they had a wide circle of Jewish friends, called 'the fraternity'. She had a happy childhood in Vienna, and spent her summer holidays in Rychnov.

In the second half of the 1930s she became aware of changes that were taking place in Austria, although her parents made sure many truths were hidden. However, the Anschluss on 13 March 1938 remains engraved in her memory. On the day that Hitler arrived in Vienna, the SS entered their apartment and closed all the drapes on the windows to prevent the adults from observing Hitler's parade. Interestingly enough, she remembered that they behaved well and even took her, as a young child, to the window to peek at the procession. When Vera's stepbrother Herbert was later forced to scrub the streets of Vienna with a toothbrush while the Nazis stood around making fun of him and other Jewish boys, she was immediately sent to Rychnov to stay with her much-loved aunt and family. As a result of the Nazi takeover, her parents, together with their friends, decided to emigrate. Some left for the US, some went to Palestine on illegal transports, while one member of the fraternity, Hans Charmatz, decided to go to Australia where he opened a knitting factory in Sydney.[29] He then submitted applications for landing permits for those of his friends who wished to follow him.[30]

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[29] Hans Charmatz later changed his surname to Chalmers. His personal history can be found in the Archives of the Sydney Jewish Museum.

[30] I owe my gratitude to Vera Bonyhady for sharing her emigration experience with me.

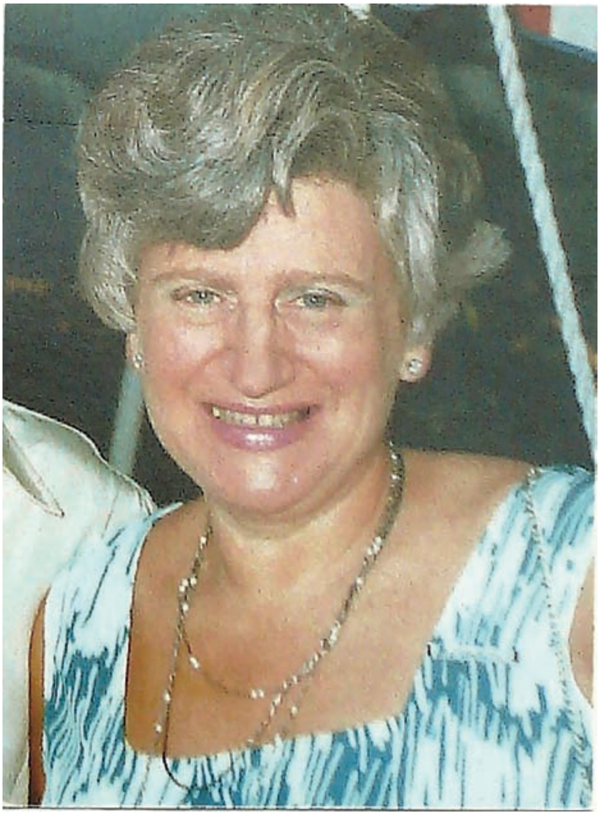

Figure 10.9: Vera Bonyhady 1926–2017. Source: Courtesy of Vera Bonyhady.

In July 1938 Vera's parents and brother left Vienna, heading for the Czech border in a taxi. After a harrowing encounter with the SS, who stripped them of all their belongings, and a distressing investigation by the Czech border police, the family was given asylum in Czechoslovakia. The Australian landing permit arrived on 3 March 1939. On 15 March, while they were in Prague to organize their journey, Vera's parents witnessed the German invasion of her homeland. With the help of a relative who was a bank manager, they succeeded in withdrawing £300. Vera still remembers the dangerous journey in a locked train through Germany on their way to

Britain. Three days later they began their voyage to Sydney from the port of Southampton on the *Maloya*.

Although they were happy to have escaped Europe in time and being impressed by Australia on their arrival, their life was not easy. Experiencing difficulties getting settled in a new country is another common theme that runs through the stories of Jewish refugees. Due to the fact that her father could not practice dentistry (initially he did but was reported to the authorities and fined), her parents began making handbags, eventually establishing their own firm, the Star Manufacturing Company in George Street in Sydney.

Vera was enrolled at North Sydney Girls High School on the advice of Dr Gerty Angel-Lord, the wife of Francis Lord, where she was very well received by her Australian schoolmates and teachers. After graduating from North Sydney Girls High School and later a domestic sciences school at Bondi, Vera became interested in pursuing a career in pathology. She was offered a training position at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital where she remained until 1955. She then transferred to Sydney Hospital, where she was appointed Senior Technologist in the Microbiology Department and later Chief Technologist. She obtained her Fellowship Diploma from the Australian Institute of Medical Sciences in 1964. Vera was also active in industrial affairs, fighting for equal wages for women in her profession. Between 1963 and 1974 she was instrumental in presenting several work value cases before the Industrial Commission and the Conciliation Commission, which resulted in achieving industrial parity with science graduates. She retired in 1988.

Not unlike other refugees, the Holocaust made a terrible impact on Vera's family. Many of the members of her extended family, including her beloved aunt, did not survive. However, her uncle and her cousins did and after the war joined her family in Australia. Vera has returned to Austria and the Czech Republic on several occasions. On her last visit in 2000 she was present at the ceremony in which the Rychnov synagogue was transformed into a Jewish museum. It was an emotional experience for her and one that she would cherish forever. Vera was ninety years old when she passed away on 2 June 2017.

Mia (Marianne) Schulhof and Jan (Jack) Schulhof came from a well to do family in Pilsen, where their father Hugo had a thriving legal practice.[31] Their mother Anna was an intelligent and charming lady. The Schulhofs were not religious, although the family observed Jewish traditions. Both children enjoyed a happy childhood and youth provided by caring parents. Mia, who was multilingual, was one of thirteen female students who enrolled at the German University in Prague to study law. In contrast to Julia Moscheles, she did not experience antisemitism from the German students. She graduated as a solicitor in Prague in September 1938 at which time she recalled a remarkable event: having obtained her Australian landing permit, the German Dean of the Faculty of Law kindly gave her permission to sit for her final exams early to enable her to leave the country.

Following her graduation, Mia and Jack, who was seven years her junior, travelled on Czechoslovak passports to Naples where they boarded the *Orontes* and sailed for Australia. Their parents stayed behind in Pilsen. The siblings arrived in Sydney on 14 February 1939. Their mother's brothers, Julius and Otto Rosenfeld,[32] who had settled in Australia in the 1920s, owned a thriving timber business in northern Queensland. Mia and Jack lived with one of the brothers in Sydney. As soon as Mia arrived, she met her future husband, Sam Lipson, an architect by profession. They married three months later. Jack was only sixteen years old when he came to Australia. Being an enthusiastic scout, he wasted no time presenting himself at the Maroubra scout group. He handed the scoutmaster a letter written in French and from the beginning the boys made him feel welcome, becoming his lifelong friends. Lacking qualifications, Jack began sweeping floors in an engineering factory. He immediately enrolled in an English language course, which he attended at nights and within one year he had not only obtained his leaving certificate but also qualified for entry to university.

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[31] I am indebted to the late Mia Lipson who told me her story in 2007 before she sadly passed away in 2011, and to Misha Solar, the widow of her brother Jack, who kindly recounted the story of her husband. Mia's husband Sam Lipson was the architect of the Sydney Chevra Kadisha building and Temple Emanuel in Woollahra, an eastern Sydney suburb.

[32] Julius and Otto Rosenfeld were the father and uncle of Eric Rosenfeld, whose military career was described in the previous chapter.

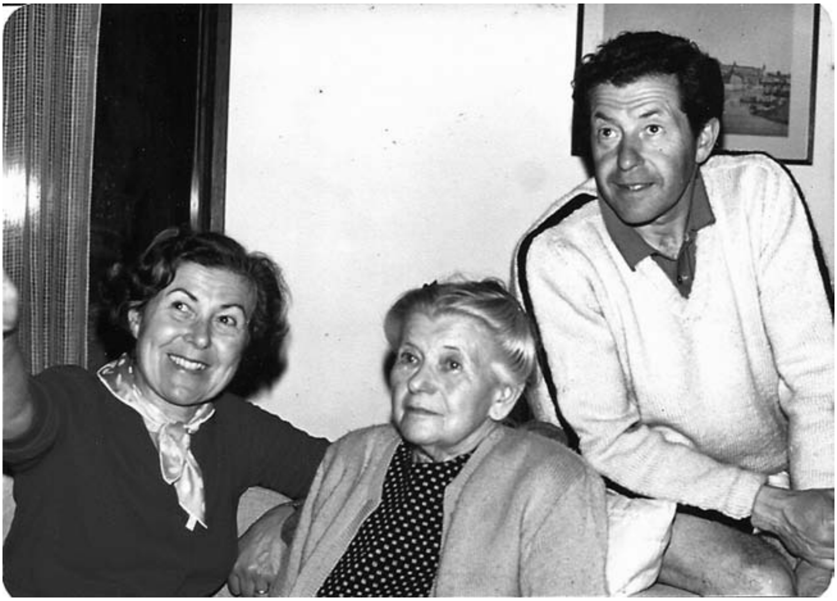

Figure 10.10: Mia Lipson, Jack Solar and their mother Anna Schulhof.
Source: Courtesy of Misha Solar.

Jack studied engineering at night and worked during the day. A quiet but determined person, he graduated as a mechanical engineer seven years later. In 1943, together with one of his friends, he began exploring the Snowy Mountains. His love of skiing, bush walking and scouting, led him to find the spot where years later he built the little Lodge in Perisher Valley. Together with his friends from Maroubra, he became active in the club of Snow Revellers. In the 1950s thirty of his friends went to Perisher to build the big Lodge. Jack, who had by now changed his surname to Solar, was not very interested in worldly possessions, but was passionate about skiing, winning competitions and medals in Australia and overseas. As president of the YMCA, he became a friend of Paddy Palin.

Mia and Jack's parents succeeded in leaving Pilsen ahead of the German Army's advance in 1938. They followed their children to Australia, but did not have an easy readjustment period. Hugo, who did not speak English and could not practice law in the new country, passed away soon after his arrival. Anna was determined to overcome the obstacles of uprooting herself and settling in an unfamiliar environment. She was respected, admired and loved by her children and extended family.

Jack married Misha Krůliš in 1954 and together they raised three children, spending their free time at Mount Kosciusko in summer and in winter. Jack worked for an industrial company, designing steam engines and later opened his own workshop. He was a person of many interests. He undertook a panel-beating course at TAFE, built replicas of vintage cars on his own and then raced them. He continued running ski marathons until 1994 when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. 'I have had a wonderful life', he said. He passed away at the age of eighty-two. In Misha's words, 'Jack's friends were all Australian, he thought of himself as an Australian, in fact, Jack was a total Australian'.

The two refugee families whose stories are the final ones of this chapter, share a similar background. The Hirsches and the Tugendhats were amongst the wealthiest families in pre-war Czechoslovakia. Marie-Louise Hirsch, her husband Richard and Richard's parents, Martha and Wilhelm, all came from the industrial town of Pilsen. Robert George Tugendhat,

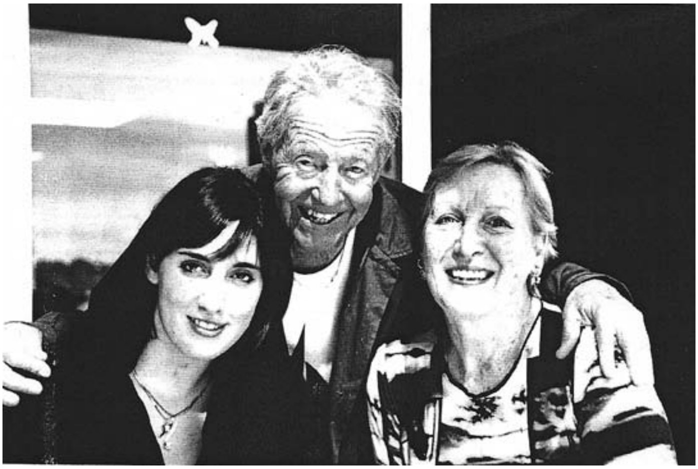

Figure 10.11: Leslie, Jack and Misha Solar.
Source: Courtesy of Misha Solar.

his wife Gertrude and their children Dorothy and George came from the industrial town of Brno, the capital of Moravia.

Marie-Louise Kornfeld was born on 5 November 1914.[33] Her parents, Hugo and Franzi Kornfeld, lived in Prague where her father was the managing director of the Adriatic Insurance Company. The language spoken at home was German and Marie Louise's knowledge of Czech was limited. Hers was an assimilated, secularized Jewish family. After being educated in German schools, she began studying medicine. A sports enthusiast, she married Richard Hirsch and moved to Pilsen, where Richard's father was the owner of Richard Hirsch & Co., an industrial complex, manufacturing iron and copper products in contract with the giant Škoda works.[34] Richard's mother, Martha Hirsch, who was well known for her love of art, hosted many famous musicians, painters and writers in her salon.[35]

When Pilsen became part of the territory ceded to Hitler by the Munich Agreement, Wilhelm, Martha and Richard left town and moved to Prague. At that time Marie-Louise and her sister were on a skiing holiday in Italy. Their family told them not to return. However, when their tourist visas expired, the Italian police threatened to deport them to the Austrian border. Their visas were only extended through their father's contacts with the headquarters of the Adriatic insurance company in Rome. Richard then joined his wife and sister-in-law in June 1939 and together they moved to the village of Santa Margarita where they stayed for nine months. During that time they became fully conversant in Italian. Wilhelm Hirsch, who was acquainted with the Schulhof family in Pilsen, asked the Rosenfeld brothers in Queensland to sponsor his son and daughter-in-law. Richard and Marie-Louise finally obtained their landing permits in Santa Margarita upon paying £1,500. They arrived in Sydney on the Lloyd Triestino ship, *Remo*, on 12 February 1940.

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[33] I met with Marie Louise Hirsch for the first time in January 2007 when she recounted the story of her life, for which I am very grateful.

[34] Hirsch's father worked in partnership with Oskar Semmler who also immigrated to Australia prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

[35] I am indebted to Peter Charles, Hirsch's nephew, for supplying me with additional information on the Hirsch and Kornfeld families.

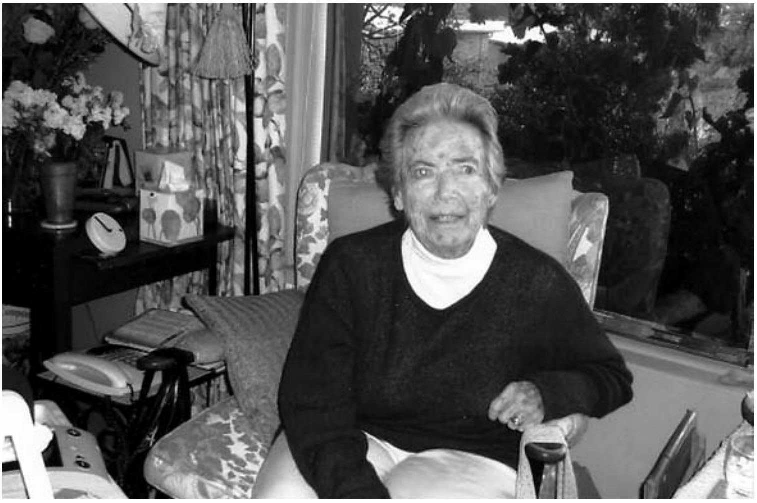

Figure 10.12: Marie-Louise Hirsch 1914–2015. Source: Anna Rosenbaum.

Richard, who was a solicitor and engineer but could not find employment in his previous professions, worked as a labourer in a timber yard to earn the money to bring his parents to Australia. Marie-Louise could not afford to complete her medical studies. She worked as a florist, a dressmaker, a secretary to a German doctor and in a laundry/dry cleaning business, ironing clothes and making alterations. They rented a cottage, which they shared with other refugees, pooling their incomes together. Later they bought a home in Bellevue Hill and Marie-Louise became a much sought after ladies' dressmaker, a profession, which in her words, she 'had a flair for'.

In contrast to other refugees whose parents perished in the Shoah, both Richard and Marie-Louise's parents' lives were spared. The story of the Hirsches' escape from the Protectorate is of particular interest. Martha's cousin Anna Stern, who worked for the Zentralstelle in Prague, succeeded in securing their certificates for Palestine through her contacts with Y'akov Edelstein. In return, the Hirsches provided funds in support of the Zentralstelle and paid a considerable sum of money to the Germans. They were then able to leave for Palestine, where they remained for a couple of years before leaving to settle in Australia. On 5 June 1942 they arrived by air in Darwin. Suffering from depression and a heart condition, Wilhelm died on the day Sydney Harbour was invaded by Japanese submarines. According to Marie-Louise, he lost his will to live. Martha Hirsch found employment in a factory, producing plumbing supplies. Marie Louise's parents, the Kornfelds, stayed in Prague and were later deported to Terezín where they remained throughout the war. After liberation, they joined their second daughter in Buenos Aires. One of the most emotional experiences recounted by Marie-Louise was her reunion with her family in Argentina. Following her sister's death from cancer in Paris, her parents moved to Australia in the 1960s to live with Marie-Louise and Richard.

Richard became a successful businessman, specializing in the sale and the maintenance of brick-making machinery and related kilns. He was also an importer of Italian tiles. The couple travelled extensively. Their home became a centre of music and culture, which they enjoyed with their old refugee friends. Richard died suddenly in 1975. On 5 November 2014 Marie-Louise celebrated her 100th birthday. She passed away six months later on 8 May 2015. Born four months after the beginning of the First World War, she died on the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The stories of the Schulhof/Solar and the Hirsch family are of particular interest for a number of reasons. Both Hugo Schulhof and Wilhelm Hirsch, two wealthy entrepreneurs of high social standing in their native Pilsen, were unable to adjust to their new environment. They apparently lost the will to live and passed away soon after their arrivals in Australia. In contrast, both Anna Schulhof and Martha Hirsch were determined to overcome the difficulties of settling in the new country and regained their confidence by applying themselves to their families (in Anna Schulhof's case) and earning a livelihood as a factory worker (in Martha Hirsch's case).[36] Both Marie-Louise and Richard, who had left privileged lives behind, found reassurance and support living with a group of fellow refugees who were also finding their way in an unknown environment, benefitting from the mutual support and experiences offered by that community of emigrants. This was also the case with Vera Bonyhady's parents who kept in close contact with their friends from the old country as they renewed their lives in Australia.

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[36] Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Perspectives from the Australian Jewish Community', *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal II* (2002), 87–101.

Apart from Paul Morawetz (discussed above), the most well-known of all Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia is the Tugendhat family. Born on 11 March 1897, Robert George was the third son of wealthy textiles manufacturers in Brno. His elder brother Fritz and his wife Greta commissioned the German architect Mies van der Rohe to build their home, which became the famous Tugendhat Villa in Brno, a world heritage building under the auspices of UNESCO. Robert studied electrical engineering and whilst working in the family's Max Kohn factory developed an interest in innovations, several of which he patented. He married Gertrude Handovsky in September 1931. Gertrude had a daughter from her first marriage, called Dorothy, who was born in 1930 and whom Robert legally adopted and brought up as his own, much loved daughter. Their son George Robert was born in 1932. In 1938 Robert and his wife, who closely followed developments in Germany, made the decision to emigrate to Australia. Upon receiving notification that the family had been issued an Australian landing permit, Robert wrote a letter to the editor of the *SMH* in October 1938 in which he expressed not only his gratitude to the Australian government for giving him and his family permission to enter Australia but pledged to contribute his knowledge to the industrial development of the country 'which offered me a new home'.[37] On 16 January 1939 the Tugendhat family left Brno for Naples, where on 22 January they set sail for Australia on the *Orontes*. They stopped at Fremantle and Adelaide before arriving in Sydney on 14 February 1939 and settling in the seaside suburb of Manly.

In September 1939 Robert changed the family name to Tugen. Working as a draughtsman for a shipping company, he applied for an engineering position at the Ministry for Munitions. His application was successful and the family moved to Melbourne where they settled permanently. With the support of Edgar Peacock,[38] Robert became one of the founding members of the Czechoslovak Club in Melbourne, together with Oscar Semmler,

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[37] Letter to the Editor, *SMH* (24 October 1938).

[38] Edgar Peacock was the Honorary Consul of Czechoslovakia in Melbourne.

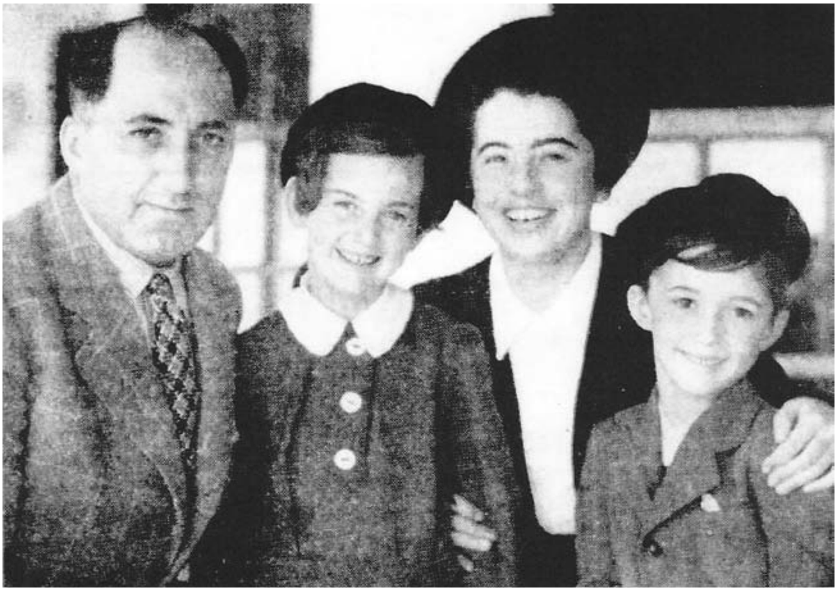

Figure 10.13: Robert, Dorothy, Gertrude and George Tugendhat.
Source: Trove digitalized newspaper.

Marco Braunstein, Ernst Singer and Paul Morawetz.[39] He was an innovator of much military hardware, intended for use of the AIF although for some unexplained reason the Australian munitions industry did not recognize the value of his inventions.[40] In addition, Robert created new machinery for the textiles and sporting goods industries, which he successfully patented in the United States and Canada. After the war Robert established the Vulcan Electrics company, which began producing a wide range of

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[39] Report from Solanský to the Czechoslovak government in exile, 28 May 1942, AMZV, LA 1939–1945, Karton 167, 'Diplomatický sbor ZU ČSL'.

[40] The series of his innovations can be found in files housed at the NAA. Item Numbers: 9796615, 9796660, 60189015, 1046304, 3380115, 3415495, 4234088, 4329138, 4329520, 4334140, 4336140, 4336796, 4337117, 4337523, 477976, 478256, 4789377, 4821041, 4822940, 5438986, 5482682, 7859741, 30322026, 60189015, 5808819, 6922961, 7024323.

Figure 10.14: Dorothy Kiers (Tugen). Source: Courtesy of Dorothy Kiers.

household electrical goods, supplying the Australian market with products of high quality.[41] Employing 1,100 workers and providing training facilities for apprentices, the plant, which expanded over the years was the first of its kind in Australia. Robert eventually resigned from the management of the company in 1963.

The Holocaust dealt a terrible blow to Robert. His two brothers and one of his sisters and their families escaped the country in time. However, his youngest sister Lisa refused to follow him to Australia. She perished together with her husband and their two young children. He passed away in Melbourne in 1978, his wife Gertrude in 1982 and his son George in 2006.

Dorothy married Josef Kiers. She worked in the Education Department of Victoria, first as a teacher/librarian and then in the administration of community and adult education, public information and policy development. Dorothy and her husband are parents of four children, while George was the father of two.[42]

The refugee stories, described in this chapter, mirror the history of hundreds of refugees who came to Australia from Czechoslovakia, as well as other European countries in the late 1930s and during the Second World War. Given the distance in time since these events took place and the passing of the overwhelming majority of those who were actual eyewitnesses, I was grateful to have been able to record the stories of former refugees from Czechoslovakia. They are now part of Australia's multicultural history and their narratives will also find a place in the annals of the Jewish community in their former homeland.

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[41] 'Training in many Trades', *The Age* (14 February 1987).

[42] I wish to express my gratitude to Dorothy Kiers for providing the details concerning her family's refugee story and to her great nephew, Robert Tugen, who was instrumental in helping me find her after a six-year search for the descendants of this well-known family.

Conclusion

This book has dealt with several key issues that link Czechoslovakia to Australia. Both countries were established as independent states at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, given the geographical distance, the historical, socio-political, economic, linguistic and cultural differences, it is difficult to imagine how these two countries would eventually connect. It was only during the Czechoslovak crisis and when the two countries were faced with the prospect of a new world war that the foreign policy concerns of both countries, and immigration issues on the part of Australia, came to the forefront and formed the links that exist today.

This book has sought to document the story of early contacts between Australia and the newly created state of Czechoslovakia following the end of the First World War. It has also investigated Australian reactions to the Munich Agreement, from the governmental level, in parliament, from various left-wing and women's movements as well as the interaction between political developments in Europe and the mounting refugee crisis. Beginning with the takeover of the Sudetenland, then the incorporation of the remainder of the country into the Third Reich in March 1939, and continuing after the outbreak of the Second World War, the story of Czechoslovakia and Australia is a fascinating one.

As a Dominion of the British Commonwealth and an isolated country that had just united and established its independence from Britain in 1901, Australia was reluctant to pursue an independent foreign policy. The perception that Britain was the most powerful country in the world and was in a leading position to determine the course of history, led Australian politicians to support the foreign policy of the 'Mother country'. Australian reactions to the political situation of Czechoslovakia, under the threat from Nazi Germany, demonstrate the contemporary Australian dependency on the British Foreign Office. The Australian government followed the lead of British diplomats in assessing the situation in a country that they believed should never have emerged from the ruins of the Habsburg

Empire. Disregarding Czechoslovakia's democratic foundation, members of the Australian government and Federal Parliament, with only a few notable exceptions, supported the policy of appeasement. Those few courageous people who voiced their objections to appeasement did so for several reasons: they followed developments in Europe, they were informed about the tactics of the Nazi establishment, and they abhorred the harsh treatment of opponents to the Nazi regime and the persecution of Jews.

So why did the Australian government not object to Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia? There are several answers to this question. The most obvious being that it was not only Britain that was interested in preserving world peace at the cost of Czechoslovakia. France, a close ally of Czechoslovakia and the United States, also wanted peace at all costs. These Western countries did not consider Beneš, the Czechoslovak President, as an equal partner in their discussions and by their actions demonstrated that they felt it was not worth risking a war with Nazi Germany in order to save Czechoslovakia. Australia thus felt secure in the knowledge that, in following Britain's policies, it had made the right decision to disregard Czechoslovakia's struggle to maintain its existence.

However, the fallout from the Munich Agreement and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia raised an important issue that had not previously been taken into account by the powers that collaborated with Hitler in appeasement: the fate of hundreds of thousands of victims of Nazi terror. Jews, Sudeten German opponents to Hitler's regime, Czech inhabitants of the Sudetenland, the Jewish population of Slovakia, as well as German and Austrian asylum seekers in Czechoslovakia were all to be victims of the policy. As a consequence of these developments however, there was an increasing demand for Australia to liberalize its immigration policy and allow more Czechoslovak refugees in.

This book also highlights another forgotten issue – the fact that the Australian government was much more sympathetic to the plight of non-Jewish German refugees from the Sudetenland than the Jews who remained in the post-Munich state of Czecho-Slovakia. The Department of the Interior repeatedly considered favourably applications for Australian landing permits by non-Jewish Sudeten Germans who were classified as 'the good-type of refugees' Australia was interested in absorbing. In contrast, Jewish refugees encountered many obstacles when applying for the same landing permits. There was an inherent opposition to Jewish immigration by British and Australian government officials, including some members of Federal Parliament, as well as Solanský, the Czech Consul-General in Sydney.

Yet, Jews from Czechoslovakia were an integral part of the worldwide refugee movement, which preceded the outbreak of the Second World War and continued, albeit on a lesser scale, during the war. The story of Czechoslovak Jewish migration mirrors the broader refugee Jewish story of anti-Jewish prejudices and stereotypical views that prevented a more humanitarian approach to the worldwide Jewish refugee crisis. As such, this study reinforces the analysis of the other key Australian scholars in this field: Paul R. Bartrop, Michael Blakeney, Konrad Kwiet, Andrew Markus and Suzanne Rutland[1] and does not support the arguments of William D. Rubinstein.[2]

In spite of significant obstacles that Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia had to overcome in their quest to reach Australia, those who did succeed in reaching our shores before and during the war did eventually manage to readjust to their new country. In many cases, their contributions to this country's growth were remarkable. In Australia they found an environment in which they could realize their visions of developing new opportunities for themselves and for the benefit of their new homeland. By using their professional expertise and much sought after skills, they developed new industries and businesses, demonstrating great ingenuity together with a strong determination to succeed. They made important and essential contributions to the scientific development of Australia and even joined the ranks of the Australian Defence Forces during the war. In the post-war period, Paul Morawetz became a leading member of the Executive Council of Australian Jews, while Kurt Gottlieb was one of the founding members of the Jewish community in Canberra. In the course of their integration and assimilation process, these former refugees came to appreciate Australia as a country that gave them security, freedom and a new start in life.

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[1] Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–1945*; Michael Blakeney, 'Australia and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Government Policy 1933–1939', *Leo Baeck Year Book* 29 (1984), 103–133; Kwiet, various articles (see bibliography); Andrew Markus, 'Jewish Migration to Australia 1939–1949', *Journal of Australian Studies* 13 (1983), 18–24; Rutland, *The Edge of the Diaspora*.

[2] William D. Rubenstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

In 1947, Reginald Robert Betts, Masaryk Professor of the Central European History School of Slavonic and East European Studies at London University lauded the restoration of Czechoslovakia and Edvard Beneš's return to the presidency, imploring his audience not to forget Czechoslovakia.[3] Unfortunately, Betts' reminder of the significance of Czechoslovakia's struggle for the preservation of her independence in 1938 and 1939 is now seldom recalled. When the Czech Republic commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Munich Agreement in September 2013, the occasion also escaped Australia's attention. As far as Australia was concerned the event that set the Second World War in motion seemed to have faded into history.

At a time when the present generation of Australians is focused on more recent, equally disturbing political developments and there are more desperate people trying to find refuge in Australia, lessons from the Czechoslovak tragedy should not be consigned to oblivion. Through the creation of a detailed database and an oral history project to record individual stories for posterity this study has sought to bring the forgotten past back to life and to ensure that the immigration experiences of Czechoslovak Jewish refugees in Australia are not lost. This study not only sheds further light on the challenging period leading up to the outbreak of war and the Holocaust, but it adds to the history of exile literature through detailed documentation of the escape of Czechoslovak Jews from Nazi-dominated Europe and their settlement in distant Australia.

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[3] Polišenský, *History of Czechoslovakia in Outline*, preface.

Chronology of Events

12 March 1938	Germany invades Austria.
15 March 1938	Hitler's annexation of Austria.
24 March 1938	Chamberlain in his speech to the House of Commons distances himself from Czechoslovakia's struggle to preserve its independence.
24 April 1938	Henlein delivers his speech in Karlovy Vary in which he serves an eight point ultimatum to the Czechoslovak government: equality with the Czechs, acknowledgement of the Sudeten Germans as a legal entity, endorsement of the Sudetenland as a German settlement area, autonomy for Sudeten Germans, provision of legal facilities for Sudeten Germans throughout the republic compensation to the Sudeten Germans for alleged misconduct, German public servants to be appointed throughout the Sudetenland and the right to adhere to National Socialist ideology in the region.
28–29 April 1938	British and French government Ministers meet in London to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia.
7 May 1938	The British and French governments resolve that the Czechoslovak government must take responsibility for the situation in the Sudetenland.
12 May 1938	Henlein visits London to seek British government's support for Sudeten German claims for justice.
20–22 May 1938	Czechoslovakia mobilizes its army after receiving incorrect information that the German army was about to attack the country.
30 May 1938	Hitler's invasion did not ensue.
8 June 1938	The SdP demands the establishment of a Sudeten German assembly.
23 June 1938	Negotiations between the Czechoslovak government and the SdP are thwarted due to the Nazi Party's resolve to undermine them.

18 July 1938	Lord Runciman is appointed by the British government as arbiter between the two parties.
30 August 1938	The Czechoslovak government presents the so-called Third Plan in an attempt to accede to Sudeten German demands which the SdP rejects.
6 September 1938	The Fourth Plan initiated by the Czechoslovak government is discarded under the pretext of an incident organized by the SdP in Ostrava.
7 September 1938	The editor of *The Times* appeals to Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland to Germany.
12 September 1938	Hitler threatens Czechoslovakia at the Nuremberg rally.
13 September 1938	Further unrest in the Sudetenland staged by Henlein's party.
15 September 1938	Chamberlain meets Hitler at Berchtesgaden to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia.
19 September 1938	Britain and France present the Czechoslovak government with the Anglo-French proposal to cede regions with a German population of 50 or more per cent to Germany.
21 September 1938	Czechoslovakia unwillingly accepts Anglo-French proposals.
22–23 September 1938	Chamberlain travels to Godesberg for another meeting with Hitler who demands the occupation of the Sudetenland.
25–26 September 1938	French and British politicians meet in London for further discussions. Both decide to pursue the policy of appeasement in order to satisfy Hitler's demands and in an effort to prevent the outbreak of a new world war.
29–30 September 1938	The Munich Agreement to cede the Sudetenland to Germany is signed by Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini.
1 October 1938	Germany begins its occupation of the Sudetenland, the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic is established.
5 October 1938	President Beneš resigns.
6 October 1938	Slovakia becomes an autonomous region.
22 October 1938	President Beneš goes into exile.
11 November 1938	The Institute for the Care of Refugees is established.
30 November 1938	Hácha becomes Czecho-Slovakia's president.
27 January 1939	Jewish professionals are dismissed from their positions.
14 March 1939	Slovakia declares its independence under Hitler's protection.

15 March 1939	The Wehrmacht crosses the Czecho-Slovak border and occupies the rest of the country: the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is established.
21 July 1939	The Center for Jewish Emigration (Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung) is established in Prague.
1 September 1939	The Second World War begins.

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